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THE KING  
WASHINGTON  
A ROMANCE



BY  
ADELAIDE SKEEL  
?  
WILLIAM H. BREARLEY

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1, Name <sup>(Geo. Washington)</sup> — Fiction

2, Fiction, American

Harriet A. Rice

~~From~~ Cog. Hall James '98

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#### THE ETRICK HOUSE

“The same house stands to-day but little altered (although vacant and deserted), and is pointed out to strangers as the temporary residence of Lafayette in 1781.”

Page 30.

*KING*

*WASHINGTON*

A ROMANCE OF THE  
HUDSON HIGHLANDS

*BY*

*ADELAIDE SKEEL*

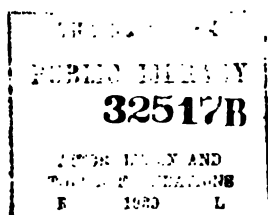
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*WILLIAM H. BREARLEY*



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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	PAGE
I.—AN INTERRUPTED BANQUET . . . . .	9
II.—A SONG AND ITS SEQUEL . . . . .	14
III.—A CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE . . . . .	22
IV.—TWO WORDS . . . . .	27
V.—AN INTERRUPTED BREAKFAST . . . . .	30
VI.—IMPORTANT TIDINGS . . . . .	39
VII.—MY LADY'S GARDEN . . . . .	43
VIII.—PAROLE OF HONOR . . . . .	46
IX.—ALL IS NOT GRIST THAT COMES TO THE MILL.	49
X.—LOVE IS NOT ALWAYS IN THE LOVING-CUP . .	55
XI.—WHO LOSES HIS TEMPER IS DEFEATED . . . .	65
XII.—WHO SEEKS FINDS . . . . .	73
XIII.—IN THE GLEN . . . . .	79
XIV.—GATHERING MINT AND EXPERIENCE . . . .	84
XV.—A LOVER'S QUARREL . . . . .	95
XVI.—LUCY KNOX HAS A DREAM . . . . .	102
XVII.—"I LEAD ANOTHER LIFE THAN THIS" . . . .	106
XXVIII.—FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW . . . .	111
XIX.—THE CAPTAIN MAKES AN EXPLANATION . . .	118
XX.—A FISH STORY . . . . .	123
XXI.—THE INDIAN DANCE AT THE DANSKAMER. . .	131
XXII.—AN EVIL OMEN . . . . .	136
XXIII.—WASHINGTON SENDS A LETTER TO MARGARET.	144
XXIV.—A RENDEZVOUS, BUT NOT OF LOVERS . . . .	148
XXV.—LUCY KNOX'S "PRETTY FRISK" . . . . .	153
XXVI.—THE MINUET . . . . .	161
XXVII.—SCRATCHED ON A WINDOW-PANE . . . . .	165
XXVIII.—A CIPHER DECIPHERED . . . . .	172
XXIX.—ANIMATED SHADOWS . . . . .	178
XXX.—CINDERELLA SUSPECTS HER FAIRY PRINCE . .	184
XXXI.—AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE . . . . .	190
XXXII.—PEGGY AND YANKEE DOODLE . . . . .	194
XXXIII.—PASCHAL TELLS ANOTHER FISH STORY . . .	198

\* Fannie Irvin

March 31, 1939

	PAGE
XXXIV.—PUNCH AND POLITICS . . . . .	201
XXXV.—AN UNEQUAL CONTEST . . . . .	205
XXXVI.—ECHOES FROM THE BALL . . . . .	213
XXXVII.—MR. ETTRICK MAKES A SUGGESTION . . . . .	215
XXXVIII.—THE BLACKSMITH TIGHTENS A SHOE . . . . .	222
XXXIX.—STRATEGY . . . . .	227
XL.—MARGARET MAKES A DISCOVERY . . . . .	232
XLI.—THE CAPTAIN MAKES A REQUEST . . . . .	236
XLII.—THE UNSEALED PACKAGE . . . . .	239
XLIII.—IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN . . . . .	244
XLIV.—THE ANVIL MADE READY . . . . .	248
XLV.—THE CUT DIRECT . . . . .	251
XLVI.—A MOTHER CONFESSOR . . . . .	256
XLVII.—MARGARET TALKS WITH GENERAL WASHINGTON . . . . .	260
XLVIII.—AN AFFAIR OF CEREMONY . . . . .	266
XLIX.—OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS . . . . .	271
L.—“MORE” . . . . .	278
LI.—THE SECRETS OF A WORKBASKET . . . . .	283
LII.—“SEARCHING OUT A MATTER” . . . . .	286
LIII.—HIS TITLE TO A CROWN . . . . .	289
LIV.—“MERCY SEASONS JUSTICE” . . . . .	295
LV.—RETURNING HOME . . . . .	296
LVI.—DARKNESS AND DAWN . . . . .	299

---

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

	PAGE
THE ETTRICK HOUSE . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">"The same house stands to-day but little altered (although vacant and deserted), and is pointed out to strangers as the temporary residence of Lafayette in 1781."</p>	
THE MORRIS HOUSE . . . . .	10
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">"The battle of Harlem Plains was fought that day, and they say that General Washington never relaxed his watch from the balcony over the door."</p>	
WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS . . . . .	43
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">"The house, a long, low, stone one, stood a short distance back from the Hudson, which it overlooked."</p>	
HEADQUARTERS OF MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX . . . . .	201
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">"A long, low roof projects over the little porch, under which it looks like an open left eye beneath a frowning brow."</p>	
THE GARDNER HOUSE . . . . .	301
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">"An old stone house known as the Gardner House, a building which stands to-day, with no one to tell to those who stop to ask, its long forgotten tale."</p>	

The above are all reproduced from photographs especially taken for  
this work by Adelaide Skeel.

ETTRICK'S MAP . . . . .	21
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# KING WASHINGTON

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## CHAPTER I

### AN INTERRUPTED BANQUET

"THE ladies, God bless them !"

The occasion was of yesterday, not of to-day. It was a soft April evening, and a company was gathered at the Morris House, on Harlem Heights. As the speaker, Sir Henry Clinton, pronounced these words, his eyes fell upon Major-General Prescott, who sat opposite him.

Across the hall, in the tea-room, the ladies—who had left the gentlemen a short time before—sat chatting together.

"I hear that Mr. Washington has gone to the Hudson Highlands again," one fair matron said, adding, with a half-roguish glance at pretty Mrs. Morris, in whose honor the party had been given ; "he has probably heard of your arrival in this country, and thinks it wise to retire to as safe a place as possible."

This veiled allusion to the current report that Mary Philipse had jilted the American Commander-in-Chief for his former companion in arms, Roger Morris, made all present, save the innocent victim of the witticism, laugh heartily.

"Is it true," ventured another, "when you left your home here to seek refuge with your cousin, Mr. Robinson, that General Washington really slept in the room

where your gowns hung? Their rustle must have given him the nightmare."

"Ah, my love," an older lady replied, somewhat sadly, "the battle of Harlem Plains was fought that day, and they say that General Washington never relaxed his watch from the balcony over the door. I trow, saving your fair presence, madam," bowing to Mistress Mary, who gratefully returned the curtsy, "he had no time to think of old sweethearts."

"The ladies, God bless them!" repeated Sir Henry in the adjoining room, all unconscious of the gossip of the ladies. "We will have the pleasure now of hearing from General Prescott."

Prescott rose unsteadily to his feet. This quasi-hero was no favorite; indeed, many despised him on account of his cruelty and arrogance. His reception, therefore, was not encouraging. In those days it was not the fashion to use flowers profusely for table decorations, and the expanse of polished mahogany adorned with cut-glass and silver had for its sole floral ornament a chased gold bowl filled with red and white camellias, stiffly wired to show their waxy petals above the surrounding edge of dark-green box-leaves. A single rose, which had fallen from a lady's bodice, lay upon the table near Prescott's plate. It was an old-fashioned damask rose with crinkled petals, such as grew in our grandmothers' straight-walked gardens; this the half-tipsy general raised to his lips with what seemed to a sensitive fellow next him most offensive familiarity.

"The ladies! Made to be loved!"

Silence followed the response, which, although in itself not unusual for the times, sounded coarse and vulgar on the speaker's tongue. Other toasts, earlier in the evening, had been greeted uproariously. The





THE MORRIS HOUSE

"The battle of Harlem Plains was fought that day, and they say that General Washington never relaxed his watch from the balcony over the door."





King's health had been drunk standing, each with one foot on a chair and the other on the table. "Our just quarrel with the Colonies" had been followed, appreciatively, by "The Parliament," "The Church," "The State," and now "The Ladies," which met with this unusual reception.

Sir Henry was affronted. Prescott grew red with rage ; but the awkward pause was broken by the unexpected entrance of a young man from the kitchen, who, approaching the discomfited speaker's chair, called out boldly :

"Master, it is ten by the clock. I am here. The horses wait outside."

The fellow was of a dark but rather prepossessing appearance, with long, silky black hair hanging loosely over his slight shoulders, and a pair of piercing blue-gray eyes. There was a tightness about his smooth, white skin which betokened to the physiologist a poorly nourished body, but in his bearing there was that which told of a tremendous nervous strength. He held himself half defiantly, half insinuatingly, yet with great courage ; barely glancing at the splendor of the table, as if in scorn of the costly fare. He was evidently unused to such company as were assembled in this room, whose elegance knew no equal in all New York ; yet he stood boldly by Prescott's chair, and touched his epauletted shoulder with the familiarity of a favorite child. His lithe motions attracted the attention of every one. His body seemed to sway forward and backward, as if to propitiate the man to whom he spoke ; while the changing expressions of his mobile face indicated a like suppleness of mind.

"Master, the horses wait," he repeated, with increasing vehemence.

"And you may wait, my boy," answered his master, in a tone of such surprising indulgence that every man present stared.

The servant's cheeks were thin, and there were deep hollows in his temples, more noticeable now, as excitement caused the blood to surge through his head and swell the blue tracery of veins which pencilled each side of his forehead. He reddened, moreover, behind his small ears; a dark, muddy, crimson blush which crept slowly over his determined face.

"Shame on you!" continued Prescott, shaking himself free from the intruder's familiar and almost affectionate grasp; "begone, and bring the horses at midnight."

At this rebuff the man withdrew in silence, and when the door closed on his slender figure the awkward moment following the unlucky toast was past.

Presently there came a suggestion from the least sober of the company that there should be a song; and when it was found that no one at the table could or would sing, there was another proposal, that some of the kitchen servants should be brought in and bidden to make music of any sort, so long as it was merry.

"Don't call back my man," pleaded poor Prescott, in fear lest more contumely should be heaped on him in some unlooked-for way. "He is an impudent fellow, and needs cowhiding fifty times a day. I only tolerate his devilish temper because he is so confoundedly quick and skilful in serving me."

"He doubtless gets his deserts when he serves you poorly," whispered one of the officers, whose opinion of the lad's master was not of the highest.

"Why not get rid of him and find a new man?" asked another voice.

"Oh, he is useful to me, and, as he is part Indian, I make allowance for his sullen ways. His father was a French courtier, so he says, and this son of his has a curious power of attaching himself to whomsoever he serves. He is devoted to me, and makes my every quarrel his own."

"I warrant you keep him busy, Prescott," said a man who had not spoken before, but who had keenly observed both the general and his *attaché*.

"Yes, sir," was the unresentful reply; "he has a passion for serving me,—for serving any one he likes."

"You evidently have won his heart," put in one of the youngest men present, wondering in his simplicity how any servant could love such a master.

"There is a Yankee boy in the kitchen," said an attendant, who had been summoned and now stood respectfully before Sir Henry,—“a mere lad, my Lord; but he has a voice like a robin, and he will come in, if you command him.”

"Let us have the American robin," cried one of the company; "in truth, I am told they are bigger birds over here, with redder breasts than our little brown songsters at home."

"Produce the Yankee robin-redbreast!" demanded another, less versed in ornithology.

"My friends," said the host, feeling the merriment to be running a trifle too high for decorum, "I presume we do not care to have our ears polluted with such a nauseous ditty as 'Yankee Doodle.'" Sir Henry was becoming troubled at the tipsy condition of his guests, for in those days to be only a one-bottle man was a disgrace; and the company was decidedly jolly.

"Bring in the boy," was repeated on all sides, and at last the boy was brought in.

## CHAPTER II

## A SONG AND ITS SEQUEL

THE Yankee boy came into the room, and proved to be a loutish country lad, unlike Prescott's servant in every particular.

"I—I c-c-c-can't sing anything but Yankee songs," he stammered, much overawed by the gold-laced coats about him. "Gentlemen, I—I—I—I am a Yankee boy. Gentlemen, I c-c-c-can't help it,—I—I am a Yankee boy,—I c-c-c-can't sing anything but Yankee songs."

"You d—d young rebel," said Prescott, whose temper was not improving, "give us a song, or we'll give you a dozen."

"No, no," interrupted Clinton, with what for him was unusual kindness; "'he c-c-c-c-can't help it, gentlemen,'" mimicking the stammer. "Here," he called to a passing servant, "give him a sup of wine, and let us see if wetting his windpipe will bring the music out of him."

The experiment was so successful that in another minute the Yankee opened his mouth and fairly roared out the then familiar ballad descriptive of Prescott's capture, all unconscious, of course, that the hero of the famous song was sitting at the table, obliged to listen with what grace he could maintain to verses far from complimentary.

They ran as follows, the song being frequently interrupted by shouts of laughter from all present, the unhappy Prescott alone remaining apparently unmoved :

- " 'Twas on a dark and stormy night,  
The wind and waves did roar ;  
Bold Barton then, with twenty men,  
Went down upon the shore.
- " And in a whale-boat they set off  
To Rhode Island fair,  
To catch a red-coat general  
Who then resided there.
- " Through British fleets and guard-boats strong  
They held their dangerous way,  
Till they arrived unto the port,  
And then did not delay.
- " A tawny son of Afric's race  
Them through the ravine led ;  
And entering then the Overing house,  
They found him in his bed.
- " 'Stop ! Let me put some clothing on,'  
The general then did pray ;  
'Your clothing, Massa, I will take ;  
To dress we cannot stay.'
- " Then through rye stubble him they led,  
With shoes and clothing none,  
And placed him in their boat quite snug,  
And from the shore were gone.
- " Soon the alarm was sounded loud :  
'The Yankees, they have come,  
And stolen Prescott from his bed,  
And him have carried hum.'
- " The drums were beat ; rockets flew ;  
The soldiers shouldered arms,  
And marched around the grounds they knew,  
Filled with most dire alarms.
- " But through the fleet, with muffled oars,  
They held their devious way,  
And landed on the 'Gansett shores,  
Where Britons hold no sway.

"When unto land the captors came,  
Where rescue there was none,  
'A bold push this,' the general cried ;  
'Of prisoners, I am one.'"

"Don't be squeamish, Prescott," cried one man.  
"Pray, tell us what was your costume when Yankee Barton carried you off?"

"Had you said your prayers?" questioned another, with a half malicious chuckle.

"Gentlemen ! gentlemen !" interposed General Clinton, thumping reprovingly on the mahogany with his knife-handle.

Prescott's anger had grown apace under this merciless teasing ; but, pretending to enjoy the joke as hugely as the rest, he called the boy to his side and gave him a crown, saying as he did so, "Here, you young dog, take this for your music."

The laughter stopped at this unusual burst of generosity, and before the uproar could break out afresh, Prescott's Indian boy appeared a second time, unannounced, at the door. He looked at the company with unseeing eyes, then fastened his gaze upon his master, to whom he sharply called :

"It is getting late, sir ; it is getting late."

"Yes, my boy," Prescott answered, with a vain attempt at alacrity. "I—I—I—I'm ready. Good-night, General Clinton ; go-od-night, gen'men !" He rose as steadily as the copious libations he had taken would permit, bowing to the company with all the ceremony he could command.

"Surely not so early, General," said Clinton, with well simulated gravity and courtesy ; "we have some matters to discuss soon with seriousness, and need your wise counsels. Pray, sirs," turning with a somewhat

disapproving air to those nearest him, whose hilarity had been carried a trifle further than his own high sense of decorum considered seemly, "cease your jesting, and," with a look of dismissal to the servants, "let us now dispense with these attendants, who have served us so well, and give our attention to matters of importance."

None dared disregard this order from their chief, and Prescott, partly sobered by the serious turn which affairs had taken, responded, "Mine host, I accept your wish as a command. I pray you, believe me, I did but presume to leave early lest I weary your kindness." Then, turning to his servant, he said, with apparent sternness, "Wait outside till I call you."

The lad, who had advanced to his master's chair, now silently and somewhat sullenly withdrew, pausing only a moment to stoop and pick from the floor the red rose which Prescott had let slip from his fingers a half-hour before.

"Did they give *you* a sup of anything?" asked the Yankee, who still stood peeping through the open door, like a loutish Peri—were such an expression permissible—"at the gates of Paradise, disconsolate." "And what have you hid in your hand?"

"It is nothing," was the evasive answer. "It has neither taste nor smell for such as you." Nevertheless, he held the rose to his lips, then to his nostrils, drawing long breaths of contentment at each inhalation.

"You must excuse my man," Prescott was saying, as his servant left the room, "for he has asked a favor of me, and is eager to get me away that I may grant it. I have spoiled him by over-indulgence; hence his impudent persistence to-night."



A subdued murmur again rose about the table, and Mr. Morris voiced the evident desire of all by quizzically asking what the "favor" might be.

"It is a foolish whim, my Lord," answered Prescott, obsequiously, addressing Sir Henry rather than the person who had asked the question; "but it seems that the Indians up the Hudson River are about to renew their old-time sacred dances, and my servant, who is half Indian himself, has begged that he and some of his people may be allowed to pass the lines and join in the ceremonies."

"Where does his tribe live?" queried Morris.

"Only a handful remain, sir," was the reply, "but they still cling to the site of what was once, I am told, an important Indian village. It lies under Cock Hill, to the south, and is between the Hudson and Spuyten Duyvil Creek. It is a well-protected place, snugly hidden, yet very near here."

"On this island?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do they do there?" asked a man, whose interest was awakened by such an unexpected bit of information.

"Dig clams, and fish, and——"

"Has that young half-breed of yours a squaw wife?" interrupted an officer, whose amusement had been created at seeing the servant pick up Prescott's discarded rose. "He looks quite civilized," he added, "and could wed any fair Yankee girl, I should think."

"He is not married," was Prescott's somewhat languid answer. "He is only half Indian, for his father is French, as I told you, and he gets his copper-colored blood from his mother, who is a well-known character, called 'Cooing Dove;' and, I fancy, she has

taught her son to be true to the instincts of the red man."

"I am glad he is not a married man," remarked the amused officer, "as a wife might be jealous of his devotion to you."

Prescott flushed darkly at this seemingly sarcastic thrust; but before he had time to parry it, Sir Henry said: "In reference to the Indian dances, Mr. Washington would never permit the Indians to pass the lines; and, besides, I understand he is about to take up his headquarters at Newburgh."

"Where is Newburgh?" asked a guest not famed for his geographical knowledge. "Is it near here?"

"Newburgh," said Morris, whose residence with Mr. Beverly Robinson in the Highlands had made him familiar with the locality thereabouts, "is a seditious little place about sixty miles up the Hudson, on the western side, just north of West Point. It boasts only a handful of houses, yet is afire with rebellion. New Windsor, a larger village nearby, was Mr. Washington's headquarters a year or so ago, you remember."

"Do the Indians dance at Newburgh?" asked some one else, while all waited the reply with eagerness.

"My boy states," answered Prescott, "that the dance-chamber—the *Danskamer*, as the Dutch called it long ago—is a few miles above Newburgh Bay. It is a rather broad plateau, jutting out into the river, and in old times was often the scene of dreadful orgies, which, I believe, had to be stopped by the government."

"Why was that?"

"An odd enough reason, and one that reflects unfavorably on human nature," sneered Prescott. "It seems that the Indians were perverting the white men, rather than the white men converting the Indians; and

this gross form of worship attracted many votaries among professed Christians."

"What did they do?" asked another, with the unhealthy but, unfortunately, natural curiosity of our own time and of all times.

"Committed excesses, and became reckless and ugly. When Henry Hudson's men first saw them, they dubbed the place the '*Teufel's Danskamer*' (the Devil's Dance-Chamber), and they really thought that the naked creatures they saw were dancing devils. My servant says, however, that Washington will soon permit a renewal of the rites."

"When?"

"Early in May."

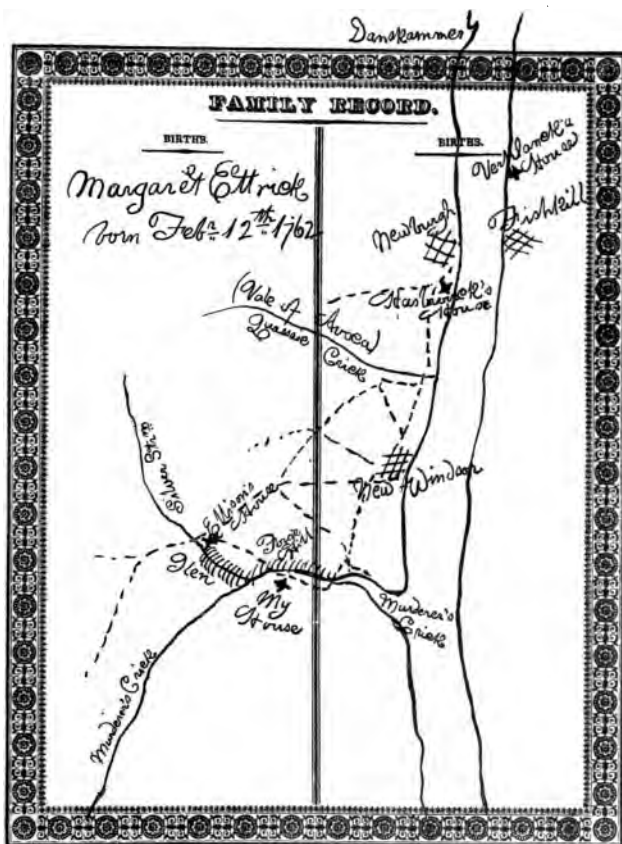
"And he wants to go?"

"Yes, and to take some of his tribe with him."

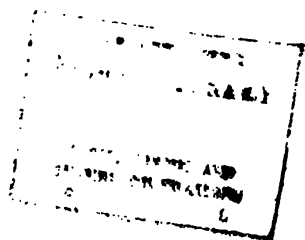
"That would require my permission as well as Washington's," said Clinton, thoughtfully; "but the fact that Washington has shifted his headquarters to Newburgh is decidedly interesting," he added.

The special significance of this change did not seem as obvious to his auditors as to Sir Henry, but all maintained a respectful silence till the speaker resumed: "I learned of it recently through a man named Ettrick, a trusty loyalist living in seclusion a few miles south of Newburgh. He contrived to send me word. Here is a plan which he made and sent in his letter, to show the lay of the land." All present looked in turn at the rude sketch, passing it from hand to hand in silence. The drawing was crudely made on what seemed to be a leaf torn from the blank record page of a family Bible; but the sacrilegious act was quite lost upon these, whose attention was fixed on the plan.

"This," said General Clinton, pointing to the Has-



ETTRICK'S MAP.



brouck House, "is where Washington has established his headquarters. He should be there to-day. On the opposite side of the river, a mile above Fishkill, is the Verplanck House, where General Steuben is to establish his headquarters. There," pointing with a tine of his fork, "is the house of one Ellison, whose family, I understand, drink out of both sides of the cup, half being loyalists and half rebels. That is where General Knox had his headquarters last year, and whither he will shortly return. This means, of course, that a portion of the American army will soon be moved into camp nearby. Ettrick thinks that the camp will be on Silver Stream, where, he says, there is a level valley, with woodlands and a good water-supply."

"Are you sure this Ettrick is to be trusted?" asked Morris, cautiously.

"Quite sure," replied General Clinton. "I have had reliable information from him several times before; besides, his property would not be worth a shilling if it were known he is our friend. For the purpose of winning my confidence, he has told me enough of his affairs to put him quite in my power; for instance, he wrote that, to prevent the Yankee ragamuffins from stealing his money, he had buried nearly all of it in his garden, and now pretends he is poor."

"How about his wife?"

"She is dead."

"Has he no children?"

"Only one; a daughter, who is his housekeeper. A discreet girl, I understand, although little more than a child."

"Never trust a woman with a secret," Prescott said, scornfully; to which aphorism he added: "Never trust

a woman anyway. They are one and all harder to shake off than the devil himself."

"In this instance, gentlemen," Clinton replied, with a tone of repression in his polite manner, "it will not be necessary to trust a woman. Our dealings are strictly with Mr. Ettrick."


"A man who distrusts a woman is the man a woman distrusts," the young officer who had noticed the rose episode now said, tersely. His clever capping of Prescott's remark, however, passed unheeded in a company where action rather than philosophy was now in order.

## CHAPTER III

### A CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

THE demeanor of Sir Henry Clinton this evening was in marked contrast to the depressed air he had worn since the preceding October's humiliation at Yorktown. He seemed quietly satisfied, and yet, apparently, in no haste to introduce the topic he had invited the guests to remain and hear, as was illustrated by his asking all present to again be seated, after their examination of the map, and then merely remarking upon the lateness of the hour and wondering if the ladies were still waiting for them in the drawing-room.

At last, however, he began somewhat abruptly, "Our Newburgh friend has suggested something which I want to talk over with you. It is——" He stopped, glanced towards the doors, and, seeing they were secure, he stepped to the windows and closed



both the heavy wooden shutters and the small-paned sash ; then, resuming his seat, he continued : " This information, of course, is confidential. I presume those present will so receive it ? "

All heads bowed in silent assent.

" This Ettrick," Clinton went on, in a low voice, to which every man listened with alert attention, " says that Washington was to establish his headquarters at Newburgh to-day, and that the most of his army is to follow later and go into camp nearby. "

" How did he find out ? " asked Morris.

" He did not say ; but I have proof that he is right, at least so far as the headquarters at the Hasbrouck House is concerned. " Clinton paused, looked again towards the doors, to satisfy himself that no eavesdropper would overhear him, then continued : " Ettrick thinks that before the army arrives, and while the Commander-in-Chief is comparatively alone, it might be possible to—— " He hesitated, while all bent forward to catch the next word. " It might be possible, " he repeated, " to—*kidnap Washington !* "

Every eye turned instinctively towards Prescott, who, as all knew, had learned by experience the unwelcome fact that even in a time of fancied security it was possible to capture and remove a general officer when guarded by only a small detachment. Several minutes passed in absolute silence as the thought took possession of their minds and the many far-reaching consequences of its successful accomplishment assumed form and shape.

With Prescott, more than with any other, rested a motive that made him accept the suggestion with avidity. Had not the officers present recognized the peculiar conditions which made him the one, if any, to



speaking first? Would not his success, if the task were entrusted to him, remove the disgrace of his own capture by Barton, and then forever relieve him from the stinging allusions concerning that ridiculous and discreditable affair? Would it not also mean promotion and wealth? and, finally,—such was the man that it was the last thing he thought of,—would it not mean a stay to peace negotiations and, possibly, ultimate success to the British arms? Would it not counteract the effect of the Yorktown surrender? His confidence grew with the passing seconds of time as these thoughts flashed in succession through his mind; but, with a wily self-possession that never deserted him, he decided that if it was worth the doing it was worth the asking; and, at any rate, it would leave him in a better relation to the whole matter if he should not volunteer to do that which he was sure would soon be offered him. He therefore raised his glass to his lips and drank off its contents at a single gulp; then, without a word, he turned to his chief a face utterly masked in assumed indifference.

Clinton met his look with one of decision as he said: "If it fails, no harm will be done, and if it succeeds——," he clinched his fist and struck the table so heavily that the glasses rattled, "as it *can* and *must*, even at this late day, then——" Stopping suddenly, he abruptly asked: "General Prescott, will you undertake it?"

Prescott, ready to reply, now waited a moment for effect, and then said, drawlingly, "Upon one condition."

"Name it."

"That you will secure Washington's permission for the Indians to go to the dance at the Danskamer." A

burst of applause greeted this scarcely qualified acceptance, and Sir Henry rose in his place to propose, "The health and success of General Prescott."

As Prescott got upon his feet to respond he was thoroughly conscious of the responsibility he had assumed, and his words, although fragmentary, commanded perfect attention by reason of the extreme gravity of their import,—a situation in direct contrast to the merciless ridicule of the earlier hour.

"I shall have to take a little time to think out this problem," he said, "and I desire the counsel of all present in perfecting the plan ; but of one important thing I am already fully convinced,—the thought came to me like a flash as Sir Henry was speaking,—that my man, who understands the French, English, and Indian languages about equally well, and has the nerve of a dozen ordinary men, is the very one to go and co-operate with Mr. Ettrick."

Spontaneous applause demonstrated the fact that his hearers approved this new suggestion.

"If this man Ettrick is what our beloved commander thinks," here he bowed deferentially towards his chief, "as I have no doubt he is, my man can be depended upon to get through the lines in his own way ; and if more help is needed, there are the other loyalists in Newburgh and the adjoining town of New Windsor, and the Indians will be there, also, a little later, with their canoes."

Clinton and Morris exchanged glances and smiled, while the others present were not slow with a noisy demonstration of approval.

"My man," Prescott proceeded, with growing confidence in his rapidly improvised plan, "speaks French perfectly, so he can easily fool Washington, who loves

no one so much as the frog-eaters." Clinton held up his hand to arrest the incipient applause, and Prescott continued: "He may require a few days, or even weeks, after he gets to Newburgh, but he can teach French to the young women, and thus avoid suspicion as he goes about."

"Capital!" said Clinton.

"And may have to make love to some of them, or give them presents to win their confidence."

"He will hardly deserve confidence, as no one can be a spy and not lie," said the sententious officer who had spoken before.

"He shall have all the presents he may desire to take," said Sir Henry, adding dryly, "he will not need assistance in love-making, I think."

Prescott was not to be diverted, however, with any pleasantry, and wishing the scheme—his scheme—magnified by every possible dignity, he resumed: "It may be desirable to co-operate from this side by a pretended attack at some time and place, of which my man can give Washington warning, and thus secure his confidence."

"That is not a bad idea; eh, gentlemen?" said Clinton, who added: "If he thought best he might also tell Washington about Ettrick's money-box, and that would make them believe everything he said. He can't have too many ways of pleasing Mr. Washington, and this would be a winning card if the other fails."

Prescott accepted the idea with a smile, merely adding: "Of course, we shall have to make good the loss to Ettrick."

"Certainly," said Clinton. "You may also promise your man that you will make him a major if he suc-

ceeds," this with the relish of anticipated success in his voice and manner. "And now, gentlemen," rising and looking around on the well-satisfied company, who also arose, "it is time for us to think of the ladies, whom I fear we have been guilty of neglecting. We will not wait for a parting song, but drink once more to General Prescott."

"And 'the Major,'" added Morris.

"And '*the Major*,'" said Clinton.

## CHAPTER IV

### TWO WORDS

IT was nearly daybreak when General Prescott went outside, to find his *attaché* standing between his own pony and his master's horse, fast asleep.

"Wake up !" was shouted roughly in his ear.

"Yes, sir ; yes, sir," cried the lad, nervously, his slender brown hands shaking with excitement as he unfastened the bridle of Prescott's horse and helped him to mount ; which, it must be confessed, this dinner-party hero did with considerable clumsiness. As the servant sprang upon his pony with incredible lightness and agility, something red and fragrant fluttered to the ground.

"You precious fool," growled his master, yet not without a half-indulgent note in his gruff voice, as he recognized the rose his man had grasped close even in his sleep. "Here," he added, "don't make too big a fool of me ; I have been guyed more than I like to-night."

"Master, I——"

"Hush, I say, enough of that. Be a man." He looked at his servant curiously, and added, "if you can. You have promised to serve me. Will you undertake a dangerous journey for a big reward?"

The two were riding side by side over the King's bridge road leading into New York City, in the early dawn, the pony crowding the big bay horse to the roadside, as ponies will. There was an odd contrast between the riders, so near together; a contrast not in mounts only but in their whole appearance,—the one big and coarse, with a cruel face, which a dashing manner did not conceal; the other small, refined, and delicate. It would have been hard for a careful observer to detect the bond which bound master and servant indissolubly together, or to tell which subjugated the other.

"What is the errand, General?" eagerly asked the attendant; "and what is the reward?"

"Can I trust you?"

The man laid his hand on his heart by way of reply.

"Mind, now," said Prescott, "there is to be no talking."

The lad responded with his fingers on his lips, in mute pledge of secrecy.

"Well, then, I want you——" Prescott reined his horse close to that of his servant—"to assist in kidnapping Washington, and to bring him here, alive, to New York."

"I am ready to do anything you ask," was the simple and satisfactory reply; no tremor betokening fear or hesitation. "And what will be the 'big reward' you promised?" he asked, as he looked up expectantly into the general's face.

"The reward," said the officer, tantalizingly, "will

be—the opportunity to pass through the lines and attend the sacred dances at the Danskamer, as you have requested.”

“Is *that* the only reward?” The young man, evidently disappointed, drew back and curbed his pony, petulantly.

“Ha, you devil!” snarled Prescott; “wait until you have the details of the plan.” The two heads were again close together, the lad’s pale face near the general’s, the latter’s breath moistening the forehead of the former, as they remained a few minutes without moving. Every detail thus far suggested was told and listened to; eagerness on the one side, aptitude and quickness of comprehension on the other; and when all had been explained, the former question was repeated, “The reward, General!”

A glance that was heart-breaking in its entreaty accompanied the query; a look that reminded one of a faithful collie dog, in the mute pathos of the appeal. The big man looked down from his horse at the slight figure at his side; looked at him with a curious mixture of concealed hatred and liking, then said: “Come here, you scoundrel!”

“Yes, sir,” and the lad drew still nearer.

“If you do *not* succeed, you will get *nothing*! Do you understand?”

“Yes; but if I *do* succeed?” was asked, eagerly.

“If you succeed,” slowly responded the other, “I will make you——” and he drew the boy’s head to him, so that his mouth actually touched the listener’s ear, and completed the sentence by whispering two words. They were magical in their effect on Louis Paschal, who straightened himself up with a look of greatest satisfaction and answered aloud, most devoutly:

"God grant me success, good master!"

"You make me feel like a fool," was the profane rejoinder; "I would rather you swore than prayed; it's more manly," he added, with a disagreeable laugh.

The servant shrank away a little; then, after a moment, as if the attraction were irresistible, he drew closer to Prescott's side and said: "Will you please say those two words once more."

A second time the general's head was bent down, and the magic words were repeated. And now the sun broke out in full splendor, for day had dawned.

## CHAPTER V

### AN INTERRUPTED BREAKFAST

FOUR days later, the sun peeped through the small-paned windows of the Ettrick House, below New Windsor, to dazzle the eyes of a half-dozen people whose daily duties began with the reading of morning prayers. The house, a plain two-story wooden one, with dormer windows in its sloping roof and a small porch or stoop in front, stood in the middle of a grove of old locust trees, a short distance back from a narrow lane, which followed the course of a deep ravine. Through this defile ran\* Murderer's Creek; so named from a bloody massacre committed there in earlier times. The same house stands to-day, but little altered, and is pointed out to strangers as the temporary residence of Lafayette in 1781.

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\* Now called "Moodna."

Because New Windsor and the adjoining town of Newburgh were full of plucky patriots, Ettrick dared not let his loyalty to the Crown be known to any one outside his own household, and for this reason the family life was a restricted one, despite the reputed wealth of the father and the unquestioned beauty of the daughter. Moreover, the location of the house, although romantic, on the brink of a creek whose roaring waters made music by night and day, was lonely, and it was an uncommon occurrence for a horseman to draw rein at the heavily barred door and ask sup or shelter. It is true, Miss Margaret amused her idle hours by surreptitiously watching the horse-shoeing of the blacksmith at the forge across and some distance down the lane ; yet she scarcely dared to wish that a gayly-attired officer would look her way, lest her father be angered. The owner of the forge, one Deacon Brewster, a Puritan, was a staunch patriot, and the links of the famous chain that was thrown across the Hudson were made here under his express directions. The forge, the blacksmith, the officers, the soldiers, even the neighing horses biting the green grass on the roadway as they waited their turns to be shod, were therefore one and all contraband ; hence, Peggy might peep through the cracks in her heavy wooden shutters only, and wish in vain that her life were less isolated.

The room in which the Ettrick family were gathered this April morning was furnished with some degree of comfort, if not of elegance, and was considered by the more humble neighbors to contain half the treasures of the old world. Many apocryphal stories, set afloat by the Orientalism of the fiction-loving negroes, gave credence to the general belief that the house boasted



carved chairs from Holland, tapestries from France, cedar chests from India, silver, cut glass, and golden dishes from London ; when in truth the round mahogany table, whose furnishings were of delft and pewter, was the sole substantial piece of furniture the room possessed. The only ornament of this table was a Wedgewood platter, "whereon blue lovers walked by the side of blue waters on whose blue shores blue deer lay down to rest in the shade of blue trees." A fried fish lay full length on this grand dish, his dead eyes and supercilious smile adding a ghastly touch to the cerulean splendor about him. At the daughter's end there was a pewter pot, with an earthen cream-jug ; one of the sort yet to be found by china-hunters in bric-à-brac shops. It was brown in color, of a fat, rotund form, from which bulged the round, jolly face of King George himself ; a veritable Toby pitcher, meant to hold a liquid more stimulating than cow's milk. The floral decorations were more artistic, if simpler, than those seen on a previous evening at the Morris House ; for Miss Margaret had been up betimes to gather a bunch of scentless blue violets—purple "roosters," as the children call them—from the wet grass. And now, at these common flowers, a horseman, unseen by the company, looked longingly, as he, like the sun, peeped through the window at the breakfast table. It is true his horse had trodden down many of a like kind during his ride from Newburgh to New Windsor, but the others had not been gathered by Peggy's fair hand.

The horseman looked not at the violets only, but also at Mr. Thomas Ettrick, a pompous appearing man, even when on his knees supplicating the Almighty ; a man ever conscious that he was Thomas Ettrick, Esq., from the faded black ribbon that tied his cue down to

the tarnished silver buckles that adorned his pointed boots.

His daughter was dressed in homespun ; a white kerchief folded about her whiter throat ; her brown hair covered with a not unbecoming mob cap. She was not a small woman, nor especially delicate. Indeed, her whole appearance of health and vigor gave her an unfashionable appearance in the days when girls ate slate-pencils, drank vinegar, and dangled themselves from bedposts by the laces of their stays, to appear slim-waisted and interesting. Her skin was dazzlingly white, however, and there was a Cupid's bow curve to her short upper lip that gave her mouth a tempting look. One would call this tall girl diminutive pet names for love's sake, although she was above average height and size ; excusing the inaptness of such characterization by a remembrance of her trusting brown eyes, or an intuition, that her touch, should she honor one with more than a formal handshake, would be sweetly caressing and affectionate. There are personalities that hide the soul, and others which disclose it, and Margaret's, fortunately or otherwise, was one of those which pleads with the world to help her onward in the way she wished to go. She was proud, but her pride fell away when once her heart was reached. Of this, however, the horseman knew nothing, and, manlike, did not guess ; he only believed the girl to be sweet and true, and longed to win her love. He had met her several times the previous year, but the meetings had served him to little purpose. She was cold and reserved, with the manner of a person afraid of herself, of her father, and of the world at large ; although there certainly lurked undeniable traces of courage in her straightforward glance and erect bearing. This morning, on her knees, in the

company of her father and a half-dozen slaves, she surely looked the dearest thing on earth, a suppliant who had no need to beg heaven for more grace.

"Most Gracious God," prayed the father, reading from a big prayer-book that lay on a red cushion before him, "who hast set Thy servant George, our King, upon the throne of his ancestors ; we most humbly beseech Thee to protect him on the same from all the dangers to which he may be exposed. Hide him from the gathering together of the froward and from the insurrection of the wicked doers. Do Thou weaken the hands, blast the designs and defeat the enterprises of all his enemies ; that no secret conspiracies nor violence may disquiet his reign, but that, being safely kept under the shadow of Thy wing and supported by Thy power, he may triumph over all opposition and——"

Outside somebody's horse neighed, and a pair of spurs rattled ; yet above these interruptions the low murmur of responses ran on.

"O Lord, save the King."

"Who putteth his trust in Thee."

"Let his enemies have no advantage over him."

"Let not the wicked approach to hurt him."

"Give us peace in our time, O Lord ; be unto us a strong tower from the face of our enemies."

"O Lord, hear our prayer."

"And let our cry come unto Thee."

To prevent his presence from being prematurely discovered, the man outside, although not praying for the King, assumed an attitude of reverence that well became his naturally dignified gravity. When the bustle within indicated that devotions were at an end and breakfast beginning, he raised his uncovered head, opened his eyes, and stole another glance at Miss Mar-

garet ; then, fastening his horse to a tree, he came boldly up on the stoop and lustily shook the heavy brass knocker on the old, unpainted door.

"Good-morning, sir," said Miss Ettrick, rising from her chair and coming across the sanded hall to greet the caller ; "will you enter and see my father?" Her formal words disappointed the man a trifle, but he hid his annoyance and answered with like courtesy, "His Excellency, General Washington, with his aides, Major Tilghman and myself, together with his family, including, of course,"—this with a laugh,—“his ever-conspicuous servant, Bill, arrived at Newburgh a few days ago. I had hoped,” he continued, hesitatingly, “that after our slight but pleasant acquaintance last summer you would have a friend’s welcome for me, and so I secured permission to ride over and get it from you.” Another pleasant smile lighted up the speaker’s plain face. “Was I too presumptuous?”

"I am glad to see you, Captain Ford," replied the girl, offering her hand to the soldier without hesitation, yet with a cold frankness that was more discouraging to her suitor than her former shyness. "Pray, tell me," she continued, hastily, to hide a pause which was growing awkward to both, "if Mrs. Washington is at Newburgh, and if we shall have any dances such as dear Mrs. General Knox promised us last summer. We know nothing here in the woods, save that the blacksmith across the lane uses his hammer and anvil without ceasing. I shall want to go up and see Mrs. Knox when she comes again to the Ellison House, but father is afraid to have me ride over Forge Hill while there are so many soldiers about. Oh, dear, I have had the dullest, longest winter!"

"And for me, Miss Ettrick," replied Ford, who was

keen enough to see the young lady cared more for outside news than personal compliments, "it has been worse than dull. I can never tell you what we suffered in Morristown ; but Mrs. Washington was so brave and noble that she gave us all courage."

"There has been nothing like the Philadelphia *Mes-chianza* in New York, has there?" asked the girl, determined to give her visitor no opportunity for personal approach, and to whose ears the report of the famous British festivities had been most interesting. "I wish something lively would happen in dreary New Windsor ; but nothing ever does happen here."

Before Captain Ford had found words to reply, Mr. Ettrick appeared on the scene, bareheaded and in a bad humor, to ascertain why his daughter lingered at the door and neglected her duties as housekeeper. His displeasure arose not only because he wanted a second cup of coffee poured out for him from the pewter pot and another slice of bread cut from the rye loaf, but because Peggy was trifling in an unseemly way with a Yankee officer.

"This is Captain Ford, father," Margaret said.

"At your service, sir," added Ford, uncovering his head and bowing respectfully. "You must remember me, Mr. Ettrick ; I was here last year."

"Ah, sir," Ettrick said, in a manner a shade less cordial than his daughter's, "are you brave defenders of your country again back in our midst?" He looked at the soldier as if he wished his question could be answered in the negative, then added, with a touch of sarcasm, which he took no pains to hide, "Will you keep the country from going to pieces? Surely I did my part when I allowed the Marquis de Lafayette to be quartered upon me. That was a trial, was it not, Peg?"

Margaret's remembrance of that season of vexation to her father's temper and larder, mitigated as it was by the courtliness of the guest entertained, was vivid, but she made no reply, being occupied in a nice calculation whether or not her breakfast *menu* would stand the strain of an extra appetite should Mr. Ettrick, for diplomacy's sake, invite the captain in. Her fears or hopes were presently realized, when the wily Tory said, with carefully assumed cordiality, "Come in, sir, and breakfast with us. Nothing to eat, however, and that nothing but indifferently cooked. No cooks in this wilderness and no broth to spoil, ha! ha!" He laughed harshly, then continued: "We are poor people, sir, poor people; but with good housekeeping we could keep the wolf from the door if Margaret would attend to my wants and not be forever running off."

"I am sure I don't know where I run off to, father," interrupted the culprit, roused from the mathematical problem of calculating how many thin slices of ham could be cut from an already closely shaved bone in the cellar, and a hope that the visitor, used to the rigors of a Morristown winter, might like a fish diet.

"Tut, tut, child," continued the old man, testily, taking a pinch of snuff from a battered silver snuff-box as he spoke, and sneezing violently as he snapped the lid. "I suppose you do not use snuff, sir?"

"I thank you, no," replied Ford, amused to see with what alacrity his host replaced the hoarded treasure within a pocket of his gayly embroidered waistcoat. "As I have already breakfasted, I must deny myself the honor of accepting your hospitality. I but rode over to see if all of your household were enjoying the blessing of health. Good-morning, sir; good-morn-

ing, Miss Ettrick ; may the sun always shine brightly upon you. Good-morning !”

With this up-to-date compliment the visitor stepped out and sprang upon his horse, with never a farewell grasp from the girl’s hand, never a purple violet in his coat. Cold, cruel Margaret ! Unhappy cavalier !

“Did your captain say the army was again upon us, Meg ?” questioned Mr. Ettrick of his daughter as the two returned to the breakfast-table,—she to help Dinah wash the pewter spoons and delft dishes, he to take up what was then a priceless sheet, a yellowed and much worn newspaper, that had been smuggled through the lines and gave news of the mother-country two months stale.

“The General and some of his staff are at Newburgh, father,” the girl answered, without much enthusiasm, tucking a housewifely and not unbecoming bib apron under her chin as she spoke, to make tidy preparations for her daily duties.

“Better there than next door, as it were, at the Ellisons, as before. Faugh ! We want none of their sort, my girl. Wait awhile, and you and I will be going to old England, and then we will forget these bad times and dull days. There is more merry-making about a Maypole, or in an alehouse for the matter of that, over the water, than in a month of Sundays here !”

“I should be glad to go, father. There is surely nothing to keep us here,” was the ready answer, which showed the poor captain’s chances to be small indeed ; but long before this Jonathan Ford was beyond earshot, riding slowly along the beautiful bridle-path by the Hudson towards Newburgh.

Today, railroad, brickyard, and squalid tenements

mar the natural loveliness of the scenery, where a hundred years ago there was nothing to be seen save the wide Hudson on the east and the high wooded cliff on the west. A mile across the river, one looked upon the blue hills of Fishkill, and watched for the flaming beacon lights at the top of the highest mountain. This spring morning, only white clouds rested atop of the hills; and the soldier, notwithstanding his disappointing call at the Ettrick House, rode back to Washington's headquarters with a tolerably light heart in his bosom. It was true that Miss Margaret had appeared somewhat cold and indifferent, yet he was conceited enough—or one might say manlike enough—to have a strong belief in his powers of persuasion, and, moreover, he believed he had no rivals to dread.

The girl led an exceptionally isolated life, and Ford was sufficiently egotistic in his self-confessed but as yet undeclared love, to be glad that she ran small chance of meeting many other men. He preferred a trifle of rusticity in a wife to any lack of freshness.

## CHAPTER VI

### IMPORTANT TIDINGS

CAPTAIN FORD was lost in a happy daydream when "Hello, John!" was shouted in a clear, loud voice close beside him, and, turning, he found himself face to face with Washington's confidential aide. Major Tench Tilghman had this morning been taking an early ride, and his approach had been unnoticed.

"I trust all's well in New Windsor, in love and



war," he said, quizzingly, adding, "if I remember rightly, that district was rather a favorite hunting-ground of yours in old times. Surely, Miss Ettrick has a fair enough face to please any man, and were I not pledged to my sweet coz in Baltimore, I should fain be tempted to poach on your manor."

"All's well," answered Ford, laconically, his day-dreams disappearing in mist, as he remembered Margaret's coldness.

Ford was a less handsome fellow than the gallant Major Tilghman, whose fine portrait one may see today in the Senate House at Annapolis; yet the blond captain had a pleasing face, and his regimental byname of "plain John" had not been given in derision. He was tall, with a strongly made figure; well built, although slightly inclining to heaviness, and with a round head thickly covered with short, straight, yellow hair. His eyes were blue, of that steadfast, honest hue that reflects none of the ever-varying shades of the changeable gray eye; while his smile was nothing short of an illumination, of whose value its owner was not entirely unconscious.

"I wish you all joy, my friend," said Tilghman, quite blind to the rising schoolboy blush on his companion's tanned face; "but teach her to whistle 'Yankee Doodle' e'er you wed her."

"Why so?" asked Ford, quickly.

"Because it is an open secret that her father is not with us."

"How do you know?"

"The Committee of Safety at Newburgh has him on its list as one who needs watching."

"The New Windsor folk were mostly patriots when I was here before," was the evasive answer. "I sup-

pose this long waiting for peace has exhausted alike their patience and their resources."

The speaker was thinking of the prayer for King George he had overheard, and his lack-patriotism in not speaking of the matter ; but, then, he recalled the exceeding fairness of his Dulcinea and kept silent.

"I must be away," he said, after a moment. "I must hasten back to headquarters ; the General has not gone out, I trust?"

"No ; you will find him still at the Hasbrouck House, where he has just finished an examination of an extraordinary fellow, whom one of the outposts arrested at Dobbs Ferry, down the river. He tells a queer story ; but the man's looks are queerer than his tale."

"Who is he, and how does he look?" asked Ford, wheeling about in his saddle, as eager for garrison gossip as a woman at a tea-drinking ; "and what is his story?"

"He says he is a Frenchman," answered Tilghman, "although he speaks good English and appears to have some Indian blood ; a small, wiry fellow. He tells us he has been living in New York, engaged in some business with his father that he could not leave before, although he has been longing to help us ever since the war broke out."

"How did General Washington receive him?"

"Graciously, because he was French. He was allowed to tell his story, and it sounded plausible enough."

"Is it anything I may know?"

"I know you will protect me if I tell you. It is somewhat confidential and important. It was this : the man said he was taking a horse to sell to a British

officer at the Morris House, near New York, and while waiting for him to come out he overheard a half-dozen redcoats planning a movement of some of their ships up the river to make a surprise assault somewhere near West Point."

"The devil he did !"

"Yes ; and he represents that, although the men had been drinking heavily, they were in dead earnest. They talked in pretty loud whispers, he said, near an open window ; and this Frenchman rode away with the secret as quick as he could. It was rather a plucky thing for so small a creature to attempt to cross the lines just to warn us ; but he looks game."

"And he was arrested at Dobbs Ferry?"

"Yes, and brought here under guard."

"What is his name?"

"Louis Paschal."

"Anything else happened?"

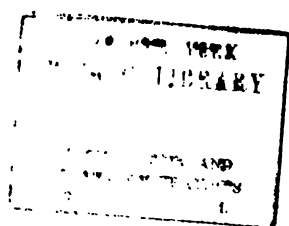
"Not that I know of. Good-morning, Captain ; remember to teach her to whistle 'Yankee Doodle.'"

The two officers saluted and each went his own way, —Major Tilghman to give directions concerning the building of a causeway in the adjacent valley, near the base of Snake Hill, where the army was to go into camp in the autumn ; Ford to gallop as fast as possible to the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh.



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS

*"The house, a long, low, stone one, stood a short distance back from the Hudson, which it overlooked."*



## CHAPTER VII

## MY LADY'S GARDEN

JONATHAN FORD, on parting from Tilghman, spurred his horse to a gallop, and rode eagerly up the last steep hill from the river towards the old Hasbrouck House, where Washington had recently made his headquarters. The house, a long, low, stone one, stood a short distance back from the Hudson which it overlooked, in the middle of an apple orchard, whose knotted trees, not yet in pink bud or green leaf, made a shadowy tracery on the sloping shingle roof. The house, built years before by that stanch patriot, Colonel Jonathan Hasbrouck, had been vacated by him and his family before the close of the Revolution, to afford a temporary residence for General Washington.

The Newburgh over which Captain Ford looked, as he drew rein at the door of the house, and waited for a servant to take his horse, consisted of dense woods, through whose bare and leafless branches one caught glimpses of a score or more of substantial dwellings on the Glebe, a half-mile distant ; dwellings which had taken the place of the log cabins of the earlier settlers. Beyond, north, south, and west, lay scattered the farms from which the farmers drew their hardily raised crops over rutty roads to the village, to be shipped in times of peace to New York, by the sloops which sailed thither twice a week ; for already the place was beginning to be noted for its shipping. Tall masts were frequently seen at the docks, for a considerable business

had also been done direct with Liverpool and the West Indies.

Captain Ford had seen hard service, and although his ardor was as great as ever, he now looked forward to a season of rest at Newburgh,—which, being interpreted, meant a season of successful love-making at New Windsor. He had received one rebuff, poor fellow, but he was eager to repeat the experiment.

Just now, however, his greatest eagerness was to see the Frenchman of whom Tilghman had spoken, and he felt sensibly disappointed when, having bowed his blond head to pass through the low eastern doorway of the house, and entered the dining-room, famous for its seven doors and single window, he found no one in sight from whom he could obtain particulars. A round table, set for an early luncheon or mid-day dinner, stood in the middle of the bare floor; a fire blazed up the throat of the huge chimney, down which Santa Claus might easily drive his eight tiny reindeer abreast; a heavy armchair was drawn up by the window, as if some one had been sitting there, recently, watching the wide river; an old clock in the corner ticked noisily, while now and again there floated in through the open sash the sound of voices. Rising impatiently from the wooden settle on which he had carelessly thrown himself, and passing along the narrow hall, Ford entered the kitchen, where Mrs. Hamilton, the housekeeper, was superintending the making of a pasty. Another step led him through the western door, where he found Mrs. Washington herself, directing two boys how to make a flower-bed.

“Dig deep,” she said, in her rich, full, southern voice, that seemed, in its kindly intonations, to change orders into privileges; “turn the sod and put in

loam, for I want my tulips and marigolds and lavender to equal any we grew at home." She was so much in earnest that she was on the point of taking the spade from the unskilled hands of her assistant, when Captain Ford, bowing low, addressed to her the usual formal compliments of the day.

"The same to yourself, sir," she responded, dropping a curtsy as low as any she had ever made in her drawing-room. Her handsome quilted petticoats touched the muddy ground, and the April breezes played wantonly with her soft, white hair in a manner far from unbecoming.

Mrs. Washington was not a young woman at this time, and she was growing, moreover, undeniably stout; but her rare amiability, together with the unmistakable air of high breeding, lent her presence a grace which our own less courtly age envies.

"The General wishes to see you," she said presently, in her slow, unhurried manner, "and desires you to wait on him in his office."

Jonathan Ford placed his heels together, made another obeisance to the lady, and withdrew. Mrs. Washington, also, curtsied a second time, with all the grace her avoirdupois permitted, and resumed her gardening without more delay.

"Dig deeper," she repeated; "and here you, Tom, sort out these bulbs and seeds, for it is getting late and we must make haste."



## CHAPTER VIII

## PAROLE OF HONOR

GENERAL WASHINGTON'S office was a small room in the northwest corner of the Hasbrouck House, adjoining his bedroom. Both apartments were furnished with a neatness that did credit to the host who had vacated his home for this honored guest. The office in which so many famous letters were written could boast of but little furniture, however, other than a large wooden armchair and a plain, uncovered deal table, on which papers lay thickly strewn. At the moment when Ford entered the General was seated at his desk, while the Frenchman, more jauntily attired than when last seen as Prescott's servant in waiting at the Morris House dinner, stood before him ; showing, despite his arrest, a coolness of manner and a daring courage alike surprising and admirable. His gray eyes were fixed on the Commander-in-Chief, but his long, dark lashes, the only ornament of his pale thin face, completely veiled whatever thoughts lurked behind. He peeped curiously at the newcomer, as if to search out his heart's secrets, while his loosely closed lips betrayed a sensitiveness that his bold bearing contradicted. Ford returned the glance with interest, yet in another moment forgot the man's existence when he turned his face towards Washington, whose presence always commanded undivided attention.

We have grown familiar with Washington's appearance through his many portraits, yet one may safely venture to affirm that this man had something greater,

better, finer about him than the representations one sees of smooth brow, high nose, and straight, firm mouth. It may be that his lineaments have been softened by the pencils of artists, till all his rugged individuality has disappeared ; for one is sure that the face of the man who led the nation through a seven years' contest bore many deep thoughtlines and care-cut wrinkles. Experience touches us, and leaves her finger-marks. The face most scarred may be his who has lived the fullest life ; but time wipes out the disfigurements, and we hang on memory's wall all smoothly beautiful alike. When will the painter arise who will dare paint us as we are ? Or when will the sitter be found who will allow such an untouched portrait of himself to be handed down to posterity ?

The table at which Washington was seated hid the lower portion of his figure, but Captain Ford was impressed afresh with the breadth and strength of his shoulders and chest, in such contrast with the puny appearance of the young fellow beside him. Paschal's physical weakness, however, lent him additional interest in Ford's honest eyes, since he frankly confessed to himself that the young man must be a very dare-devil to run such risks. A feeling, therefore, of genuine admiration for the stranger grew up in his mind, and he received the following order from Washington with considerable satisfaction.

"Captain Ford," said the Commander, while Ford saluted in silence, "I desire you to take this man under your charge. He was arrested while trying to pass the lines from below. He claims to be our friend, and I trust he is ; still, for the present, you may keep him under surveillance. In a few days you will receive further commands from me." Then turning to the

spy, he asked: "Is this arrangement satisfactory to you?"

"Perfectly so, sir," responded the spy, who stepped nimbly to Ford's side as he spoke.

"You may call on me each morning," continued the General, "until further notice. If your communications are confirmed,"—this with a kindly and reassuring smile to the Frenchman,—“rest assured you will be immediately relieved from this necessary restraint.” To both men he added, "Gentlemen, that is all."

Again Jonathan Ford made a military salute and, motioning the Frenchman to precede him, left the room; while Washington bowed his head on his hands, and sat motionless at his desk, like one who pauses to consider his tasks before he begins to perform them. His duties were urgent, but the deliberative spirit of careful premeditation had in it no touch of procrastinating delay.

Outside in the open air, under the noonday sun, Captain Ford's curiosity led him to encourage his companion to speak, and no sooner was the Frenchman's tongue loosened, than he began to talk so fluently as to raise a doubt in the captain's mind whether the man might not be overdoing a well-conned part. He spoke rapidly, the purport of all he said expressing a desire to help the cause of freedom at any cost of life and fortune.

"Methinks he doth protest too much," Jonathan said to Major Tilghman at the close of the day; "faith an' I would match his tongue with that of any woman."

"Save fair Mistress Peggy's," replied Tilghman, teasingly; but he fancied, after the words had been let fall, that the captain did not relish the association of names.

## CHAPTER IX

## ALL IS NOT GRIST THAT COMES TO THE MILL

"GOOD-MORNING, neighbor ; can you bide a bit?"

"Eh, Dick, you are around early!"

"I am here this morning on business for my cousin's old mill, and I waited to catch a glimpse of you. I was sure you would come ambling along on your old nag. How's all down New Windsor way?"

"Nothing new in particular," said Ettrick.

"Then you have not heard the news?"

"Eh, what say? News? We get none in our lonesome home. The British might burn us in our beds, and nobody would come to our rescue!"

"The King's men would spare you and yours, eh, Ettrick?" Colden said, significantly.

"And you and yours," retorted Ettrick with a chuckle.

The two men looked at each other in a manner not to be misunderstood ; then the first speaker, a small, high-shouldered man of homely appearance, yet dignified withal, motioned his friend to follow him into the cool recesses of his grist-mill, where a quiet talk could be enjoyed without fear of interruption.

Colden's family were of Scotch-Irish extraction ; a sturdy, highly respected folk, although the suspicion that they were not earnest patriots made them unpopular. Richard Colden's uncle was Cadwallader Colden, a person of much scientific ability, and at one time Lieutenant-Governor of New York. Cadwallader's son, Alexander, owned a pleasant residence on the shore of

the Hudson River, at a place yet known in Newburgh as Colden's Gore. He had, also, the one important store in the village on the bank below his house ; and before his removal to New York, had owned the mill in the Vale of Avoca, where the cousin now stood chatting with Mr. Ettrick.

Richard Colden was an old bachelor to whom the world had not been unkind. At present, he was living in Alexander Colden's house, looking after his sister-in-law and her family, and amusing himself with such other affairs as usually occupy a gentleman of fortune. He was a bitter Tory, but an affair such as the present stirred the blood of Tory and Patriot alike ; for on the night previous the British had attempted to sail up the Hudson, and Colden had the unexpected pleasure of relating the news to one wholly uninformed.

"Well, what's your gossip?" asked Ettrick, when he had followed his host into the mill-room and seated himself in a heavy wooden armchair drawn up by the one small window that overlooked the swishing water as it dashed along the flume and fell with a roar over the big, clumsy wheel. The friends sat close together, Colden's red wig bobbing in near proximity to Ettrick's powdered cue. It was well in these times to talk in whispers, when even water-rats might report one to the Committee of Safety.

"The town's all agog," began Mr. Colden, in eager haste to enjoy the first telling of what would soon be a nine-days' wonder worn threadbare by endless repetition.

"I want to know !" queried Ettrick ; "what is it? Can't you speak out, man?"

"Two English men-of-war were seen as they came up the river, last night, about sunset,—some say a little later,—near West Point."

"Is it possible!"

"I wonder you did not hear the cannonading."

"I heard nothing."

"I fancy you take a pretty stiff nightcap before retiring, else you would not sleep so soundly."

"Never mind your fooling, Dick; what next?"

"There seems to have been a surprise movement planned by the British; but Washington had been warned by a young Frenchman,—the one who was arrested a few days ago, you know, near Dobbs Ferry, and suspected of being a spy."

"I never heard of him."

"Well, the attempt was frustrated, and all praise is given to the Frenchman, of course."

"Ah! indeed!"

"Doesn't it sound like a fairy tale?"

"I leave the reading of fairy tales to my daughter and other females of weak understanding."

"Surely, surely; but the outcome of this is so uncommon."

"How so?"

"Why, the people say that when General Washington offered the fellow who gave such timely warning a sum of money,—and we know money's scarce, sir——"

"I know it well."

"That he fell on his knees like a play-acting chap on the stage and kissed the Commander's hand, and said that all he wanted was to serve the Americans."

"I reckon that pleased the General, eh?"

"Yes, sir. The man was set at liberty. But have you heard anything from——"

"Below?"

"Yes."

"Not a word."

"Are you sure your letter got through?"

"I wish I were——Hark! Some one is coming down the road."

"Surely we are set in the midst of many and great dangers," sighed Ettrick, piously, suddenly changing the subject.

"It is the truth, neighbor; for although the war is practically over, the poor soldiers, who have, as they say, 'given up all for their country,' must return home empty-handed. I doubt if many of them are able to get home, so wretched is their condition. Mark my words, there will be an uprising soon among these Yankees that will surprise everybody."

Colden's red wig moved in time with his lugubrious words; but before Ettrick could answer in an equally melancholy strain there was heard a sudden clattering of horses' hoofs, and, without word or warning, directly into the mill-room rode two young women, their short, cotton petticoats dripping with the raindrops of an unexpected April shower, the plumes of their bonnets uncurled, and their merry faces rosy with the fun and rapid exercise.

"Maria, my dear niece, you astonish me. Why have you galloped in here with your friend, Miss Jansen? Surely, it is most unseemly behavior. The noise of the wheel might alarm your horses; and, besides, you interrupt an important conference that I was holding with Mr. Ettrick. You know, since I sold the mill to Mr. Hasbrouck, you are not at liberty to frolic here as you were used."

Mr. Colden addressed his words to the taller girl, whose striking resemblance to himself proved her relationship, before his admonition made it sure.

"Oh, uncle," pleaded the wilful girl, apparently not the least disturbed by her unfriendly reception; "a storm is coming up, and dear Sallie is subject to the vapors when it thunders; are you not, my love?" She turned to the dark-eyed, bright-faced Sallie as she spoke, and received for answer a bubbling laugh that betokened an organization the farthest removed from the then fashionable malady much affected by fine ladies of leisure.

"Ask him quick, Maria," she whispered, following Miss Colden's example, jumping down from her pony, and crossing the small room to the chairs where the two men sat, staring at their giddy visitors.

"What do you want of me this morning, Minx?" Colden asked, goodnaturedly, pulling his niece's red braids playfully as he spoke.

"Uncle, please, can we take French lessons of Monsieur Paschal?" We want so much to learn to talk French; we do, indeed. Please, please, say 'yes.'"

"Fie, Chatterbox, you will be wanting to go to Paris next; and where is the money to come from? Answer me that, you saucy jade."

"Uncle, he is so brave, and will not take a penny from General Washington for his noble services; but he has asked permission to teach his own language to us silly girls. Uncle, is he not a real hero?"

"To take my money rather than Washington's?"

"Oh, please! Sallie, you come and coax him. May I ask my mother's permission? If she wishes that I should learn, dear, good uncle, will you, who have always been so generous, refuse this trifle?"

The girl had a somewhat imperious manner, which compelled attention, and little Sallie Jansen had naught to do or say save to make her bright eyes shine softly



whenever Colden glanced her way. Sallie was a born coquette, never tired of trying her "'prentice hand." Presently, however, when the cause was won, and the coveted permission granted, she turned a mischievous look at Mr. Ettrick, and said half teasingly, half in earnest: "Sir, might we ask the favor that Peggy should also join the class? She loves books far better than Maria or I, and in arithmetic, at school, she went as far as the Rule of Three, while the rest of the girls stopped at vulgar fractions. She is a great scholar, and would surely learn very fast."

"True enough, Sallie," chimed in Colden; "let your girl learn with mine. It is a rare chance, sir, here in the wilderness, to have a frog-eater at our doors. Eh, Rita?" glancing at Maria as he spoke.

"I don't know, uncle," faltered Maria, cautiously, half jealous lest three in a class might prove trumpery rather than company. She had no fears that silly, trifling Sallie would eclipse her, but her remembrance of Margaret Ettrick's cleverness was all too suggestive of a possible rivalry. In another minute Mr. Ettrick settled the matter in his own decided fashion.

"I thank you all for the suggestion, but I think it not well that my child should ape the idle accomplishments of a French court. My Margaret bides at home, sir; she bides at home, to do my bidding. I have no grist-mill to grind out gold. I wait only a chance to get out of this unhappy country. I ask nothing of America, and I give her nothing. I have nothing to give, sir; and would not give it to these seditious scoundrels an' I could."

"Softly, softly," interposed Colden, both alarmed and amused at the storm he had awakened. Then, turning to the girls, he said, as if to hurry them away

before his companion had hopelessly betrayed himself: "When the sun is out again, children, be off, and let a hard-working man attend to his business."

They made mocking curtsies in their dripping habits, and soon afterwards clattered out into the sunshine, as happy as birds.

"I am sorry Peggy cannot take lessons, too," Sallie said, with the amiability of the hour born of her own light-heartedness.

"She lives too far away," answered Maria, evasively; for her companion's remark had an implied question in it. "Monsieur Paschal would not care to go as far as New Windsor to give lessons; and Margaret could hardly ride up to Newburgh every day."

"The Frenchman came all the way from New York," argued Sallie, combatively; "and New Windsor is nearer."

"Don't be silly, dear," was the crushing answer, and so the subject dropped.

## CHAPTER X

### LOVE IS NOT ALWAYS IN THE LOVING-CUP

MR. ETTRICK spent the rest of the day in Newburgh, part of the time on Colden's wharf, and the rest in Weigand's tavern on the King's Road, a small frame building with its gable end turned towards the street, its low piazza fronting the Glebe, across which quite a number of people were walking this bright April morning. The shower had passed over, and all the little Newburgh world was abroad talking of the frustrated

British movement and praising the Frenchman's patriotism.

It was nearly evening when Ettrick reached his own house. The sun was setting behind Snake Hill in a cloud of glory ; across the still river the blue Fishkill mountains reflected the western blaze, and on every side, in the soft twilight, arose the damp earthy perfume of early spring. The man was in a tolerably good humor, the irritability of the morning having passed off under the soothing influence of many mugs of beer and some winnings at cards. His anger rose again, however, when he approached his own house and discovered a stranger waiting on the porch. Hospitality, in the days when hotels were few and far between, was a cardinal virtue which even the stingy dared not neglect ; hence Ettrick, despite his churlishness, felt it little less than criminal to let any one find his door closed. To make matters worse, the noise of voices reached his ear, and he distinctly heard Chloe say in her deep, almost masculine tones :

"Fo' de Lo'd, Missy, yo' fader wouldn't 'low no strange man to come in an' rifle an' destroy us. Do'n yo' go, now, and open de do'. Leave be de do', Miss Peggy, an' I'll 'fend ye, honey."

It seemed as if the big slave had added her own weight to that of the heavy oaken bar with which the door was customarily fastened at nightfall ; yet Margaret could be heard insisting that the visitor be admitted, and vainly trying to push Chloe aside.

"Quick, mammy, he may have an important message for my father," she said, in an urgent tone.

"He may an' again he mayn't, Missy," replied the obdurate servant.

It is impossible to tell how this uneven contest be-

tween mistress and maid would have ended had not the man asking to be admitted now turned to greet his host. Immediately the oaken bar fell, the door opened, and the spy—for he it was—caught a glimpse of a home interior which he did not soon forget. Peggy, the fray at an end, pausing a half-second to straighten her cap, which wrestling with the slave had disordered, now welcomed her father and his unknown guest with much sweetness. She stood, silhouetted, as it were, against the black woman's burly form ; while behind them both there appeared the attractive background of the sanded floor, the homely furniture, the set supper-table, the spinning-wheel with its hatchelled flax, and the freshly gathered violets on the mantel. The sight soothed Louis Paschal, whose nerves had been greatly strained by his hazardous journey, and he accepted Mr. Ettrick's invitation to remain to tea without hesitation.

"My name, Monsieur," he said, with a flourish which would have done credit to a dancing-master, "is Louis Paschal. I am a stranger to you at the present, but I trust not for long." The careful English spoken belied his claims to being a Frenchman, yet Ettrick detected a trace of something foreign in the accent, while Margaret, busied with Chloe in the supper preparations, was charmed with the irresistible manner of the guest.

"I thank you," he continued, with another genuflexion, ignoring completely his long waiting outside the door, "for your proffered hospitality. I have General Washington's permission to seek pupils in my native tongue. I am a Frenchman on my father's side, but my mother was of Indian blood. I beg pardon, Monsieur, for obtruding these trifling personalities on your polite attention ;" another graceful bow ; "*pardon*, a thousand times *pardon*. May I ask if the

charming daughter wishes to add lustre to her many accomplishments? May I have the honor of teaching her the French language?"

The clatter of dishes in the adjoining room stopped, and Chloe at this instant, accompanied by another colored woman, peeped in at the doorway. The younger negress held high above her head a dish of crabs, from which one scarlet fellow fell to the floor, while both slaves stood gaping at the visitor.

"Please, father, please, let me learn French," whispered Peggy. "I am sure Maria Colden's mother will let her take lessons if her rich uncle will pay; and Sallie Jansen, who is visiting her this spring, will study, too. Can't I join the class? Why should you keep me a dunce, father? I don't want to be different from the other girls, if I do live in the country."

"Silence, daughter!"

"But, father——"

"Daughter, is it proper for you to interrupt with your woman's foolishness while I hold audience with a guest unknown to you? Is such conduct modest and maidenly?"

"Maria Colden says——"

"Margaret, keep silence, and learn by communion with your own heart what is most discreet for a young unmarried woman to do in her father's house, in the presence of a gentleman."

This final rebuke so far subdued the indiscreet Miss Peggy as to send her scampering up the short, steep staircase to her own bedroom, there to dance and skip about in a manner not usually recommended to those whose business and duty it is to meditate on their sins.

"He has wonderful gray eyes," she said to herself. "I *will* take French lessons, and I will study so hard

that he will not be vexed to find me a dunce." Then she let her short linsey-woolsey petticoat slip to the bare floor, and when divested of its scanty ugliness took a large hoop-skirt from her mahogany clothes-press,—a hoop-skirt of terrible dimensions, flattened front and back beyond any conceivable fashion of today,—and when this had been put on, donned a brocaded satin skirt which had been her mother's. Over this she laced an absurdly short-waisted bodice, drawing the bobbin-strings with such vicious tightness it was wonderful they did not break. She next threw her mob-cap on the floor gleefully, and, after much fruitless effort to plaster her fair curls flat on her forehead, tossed aside the pomade-stick, and completed her hasty toilet by putting a tiny patch of black court-plaster on her chin, dabbing a suspicion of rice-powder on her nose, and touching up her pale cheeks with the least bit of home-made rouge from a pot kept carefully hidden for these rare emergencies.

She soon took her customary place at the supper-table, opposite her father, while the Frenchman sat at the side, facing the windows, through which he caught, from time to time, passing glimpses of the blacksmith at his forge down across the road. His glances, however, wandered but little from the sweet face beside him, whose varying blushes of delight made the color borrowed from the rouge-pot quite unnecessary. Margaret's countenance was at all times a transparent one ; for not only did her complexion change with her thoughts, but the shape of her whole face appeared to be remodelled by her mental experiences,—first growing long and thin with care, then plumping out rounded with joy, and fairly fattening on pleasure. Paschal, quick to note all this, was spurred to relate his many

interesting experiences in his best style, until it seemed—to one of his listeners at least—as if a veritable character from a song or a story book had stepped forth to charm her. It is impossible to tell how long continued these tales would have been, had not an inopportune crash of broken dishes in the adjacent kitchen forced the hostess to withdraw hastily from the table, that she might learn how many of her cherished possessions had survived Chloe's carelessness; feeling for once less regret for possible damage done than for her enforced absence from the dining-room.

"It will not be long before all we have left goes to smash," remarked Ettrick.

"Ah! Monsieur, more terrible for you were it known you were a Tory." The words were spoken in a cautious whisper, with the air of a sympathizing friend.

Ettrick, glancing quickly around to make sure they were alone, asked, excitedly: "Pray, who are you?"

"I, like yourself, am a Tory," was the subdued answer. "Do not be alarmed, my friend. I will not betray your secret. I come from General Clinton in New York."

"A spy?" exclaimed Ettrick, fairly trembling with delight and astonishment.

"Hush! Your beautiful daughter may return any moment. Listen! General Clinton approves your plan."

"My plan? What plan?" was asked, cautiously.

"*To kidnap Washington!*"

"My God!" ejaculated Ettrick, the enormity of what he had suggested breaking upon him suddenly.

"*Mon dieu!*" said Paschal, lightly, taking more wine as he spoke; "it is your plan, and a good one. I come direct from New York to tell you——"

The beautiful daughter's somewhat unwelcome return interrupted these confidences ; not without her perceiving the change in the manner of both her father and his guest, however ; but of this she wisely said nothing. Her keen wit detected that something, of which she was to be kept in ignorance, had transpired in her absence, and she determined to use her suspicions as a lever, if necessary, to further her own innocent wishes.

"Yours was a gallant part, my friend," Ettrick said, as the girl resumed her seat. "We heard of the service you have rendered."

"Pardon, Monsieur, mention it not. I walk only in duty's path. My reward is greater than I deserve. As I told you, General Washington has permitted me to attempt to earn my humble living by teaching a few young ladies my native tongue. May I hope your fair daughter will become my pupil?"

"I have no money, sir, to send my daughter back to school, nor to pay for learning of which she has no need," was the surly answer.

"Father——" faltered Peggy, tears of disappointment in her eyes.

"Be still. I have no money, I say,"

"But, father, don't you remember——"

"Daughter," shouted Ettrick, in a tone of such well-counterfeited rage, that there seemed to be no telling what would have been the result of a half-betrayed secret, had not a loud rat-a-tat at the knocker most opportunely averted the father's seeming wrath.

The spy shivered slightly, without turning his head. Ettrick's ears were dull, but he heard enough to keep him silent for a minute ; while Margaret, wide awake and alert, sprang from her chair to peep out into the



soft darkness of the evening. Chloe adjusted her turban with deliberation before she went forward to cautiously open the upper half of the door.

"May I come in?" asked the hearty voice of Captain Ford, who had timed his evening call so as to watch the spy and enjoy Miss Margaret's agreeable society at one and the same time; entering the room, as he spoke, with the cheery manner of one who has nothing but happy yesterdays behind and confident tomorrows ahead. There was a pleasantness in his easy bearing that would have charmed an older and more worldly minded woman than the girl, whose rapt glances were all for the accomplished Frenchman.

"Good-evening, sir," she said, quietly impassive.

"Good-evening, Captain," Mr. Ettrick added, stiffly.

Ford bore himself in a manly fashion, however, despite his chilly greeting. Ettrick disliked him on general principles, because he was in the American army. Margaret tried to dislike him because she knew, intuitively, that he would sooner or later insist with a lover's compelling force, that she must like him simply because he liked her. The spy was afraid of him because he knew himself to be watched; while Chloe, the only neutral person present, regarded the newcomer with a stolidity which was the nearest to welcome the poor man received. Obeying a not over gracious suggestion from her master, however, Chloe placed a chair for the guest and pushed towards him the dish of crabs, which, after the fashion of such food, appeared to contain more now than when first placed on the table.

The atmosphere was clouded. Ford was evidently unwelcome; but Paschal relieved the situation.

"I shall be happy to have your company back, sir," he said, to which Ettrick added, with a slight access of

hospitality, "I beg you both to taste of my home-made switchen before you leave. It is a tasty stirrup-cup. Margaret, fetch the loving-cup :

We can make liquor to sweeten our lips,  
Of pumpkins, of parsnips, of walnut-tree chips,"

the host added, with an attempt at facetiousness, when the four-handled brown mug was brought in, and its rather unpalatable contents of rum, molasses, and ginger, liberally diluted with water, offered to the two men.

"I wish I might give you wine, gentlemen," Ettrick said, deprecatingly, while both his guests attempted politely to swallow the cheap mixture ; "but I am a poor man, and I can but do my best."

"We thank you," replied Paschal, courteously, determined, if possible, to restore the *entente cordiale*.

"We drink your daughter's health, and your own," said Captain Ford, formally. He had no easy lightness at his tongue's end, and spoke with evident constraint. He did not reach out his hand for a second taste of the switchen, however, nor did the Frenchman's civility compel him to take another sip of a drink far from delicious.

A half-hour later, the two men departed together, leaving Margaret and her father in the dining-room.

"Why can't I learn French?" Peggy said, the moment they were alone. Many remnants of the crab supper lay upon the blue platter, and there was much of the switchen left in the loving-cup.

"I will not neglect a single housekeeping duty," she continued, pleadingly, rising to set aside the dishes as she spoke, and looking doubtfully into the half-emptied loving-cup.

"Don't throw out the liquor, child," cried Ettrick, testily ; "no, we are poor people, and cannot afford to spend and waste."

"They scarcely tasted the switchen," the girl said. "I do not believe they liked it a bit. Father, have you not some bottles of old Madeira in the cellar? And, father," coming quite close ; "don't scold me, but haven't you some money hidden somewhere in the garden? The slaves have said so ; and, father, if you will give me a very little to pay for my lessons, nobody will ever guess where it comes from. Isn't it in a tin box under the fir-tree, between the rocks? Ah, please, I will never tell any one. Give me permission to dig it up, and I will say I am making a garden if any one passes down the lane. I will study so hard ; I will study very early in the morning and will never waste a rush-light ; only give me some money, and let me take French lessons with the other girls. Maria Colden thinks herself a fine lady, because she has a rich uncle ; but, father, we are not really poor. You have money——"

"Hush, daughter ; we will need all I have saved to take us home to England——"

"We wish you good-night," said Ford, pleasantly, through the open window.

"*Bon soir, Monsieur ; bon soir, Mam'selle,*" said Paschal, and the two friends—or foes—rode away through the April darkness.

"I am afraid that homely captain of yours overheard what you said," Ettrick muttered to his daughter.

"Oh, no, he couldn't, possibly ; and besides," she added quite resentfully, "he isn't '*my* captain.'"

## CHAPTER XI

## WHO LOSES HIS TEMPER IS DEFEATED

"I THINK it so because I think it so."

"Faugh, a woman's reason, and no reason!"

The reproof was stinging and Paschal swore. Ford looked at him contemptuously.

"Well, sir," he asked, presently, "what next?"

The two stood under the old apple-trees on the northern side of the Hasbrouck House, the day after the evening call at Ettrick's; but the subject under discussion was not the one which lay nearest Ford's heart, namely, Miss Margaret, for the men were speaking of her father's politics.

"You confess to eavesdropping, when you learned the secret you wish to communicate to General Washington, and this after receiving the most generous hospitality."

Yet, chafing under the reprimand implied, the Frenchman answered with what equanimity he could muster: "Yes, sir; if it pleases you to put it that way. Figure to yourself, Monsieur; I seek pupils. I receive most amiable treatment from the most charming of ladies; *mon dieu*, but she is an angel from heaven——"

"Kindly leave mention of that lady or of any lady out of this report," interrupted the captain, furious, in his turn, as he recalled the glances which this stranger had dared throw at the fair Peggy; at the girl towards whom he, after a year's acquaintance, dared not approach; glances, forsooth, which the innocent child had almost invited!

"You confess to have listened to what the daughter said in private to her father," he repeated, sternly.

"*Mais, oui, Monsieur—*"

"Will you oblige me by speaking a decent language, that a fellow can understand?"

"Sir, I was in the darkness outside the window, having made my adieux, when I heard, without wishing to hear, what the lady——"

"Damn it! will you drop mention of the lady?"

"*Bien, Monsieur, pardon!* The father said nothing but, 'be quiet,' or 'hush;' that was all."

"Then you have nothing to report to the General?"

"The father said nothing but what I have told you already."

"Was that all?"

"That was all, but—if you will permit me to mention——"

"Go ahead, and make haste."

"Mam'selle spoke of something hidden in the garden; it may be hidden for her *dot*——"

"For her what? Have you not an English tongue in your head?"

"For her marriage. I fancied, perhaps——"

"What business had you to fancy anything about a young woman's marriage?"

"It is the custom in France—although I do not know how it may be here—to give one's daughter a marriage portion. She pleaded with her father, and spoke to him of a box hidden near a fir-tree, and she wanted some of the money. That was all, sir. I heard you approach, and made haste to leave, that I might accompany you home."

Ford scraped his heavy boots over the rough stubble;

looked at the clear blue sky through the bare branches, as if hoping heaven would lend him help, and, finally, bringing himself back to earth, with a manner devoid of all personal feeling, said ; " I desire you to make a statement in writing of this matter for His Excellency, that I may present it to him at his leisure. At present he is greatly occupied with the affair of Captain Huddy, and it will not do to disturb him."

" I will make the statement in writing, if that is your wish, Monsieur ; but I will not trouble you to present it."

" You will not ?" repeated the now thoroughly disconcerted Ford ; " and, pray, why not ?"

" Monsieur, I am the servant of General Washington, as are you. I will await his leisure to read my report, rather than your leisure to present it." With this, Louis Paschal bowed and withdrew.

Now was poor Ford troubled indeed. If there were truth in the story afloat, impugning Ettrick's loyalty,—and here a remembrance of the overheard prayer for the King was awakened in his mind,—could he be a true patriot and shield the father for the daughter's sake ? If the revelation might only be made later ; after he had secured a right to protect Margaret with his own name ; if necessary, with his own life ! If he had time to teach her to trust him, then surely this trouble would draw them closer to each other ; but such a delay might not be. The Frenchman was angered ; he would hasten to make much out of a possible nothing, and before twenty-four hours had passed, a searching party, which he foresaw that he would have to lead, would be digging in my lady's garden, and thereby incurring her endless animosity.

Leaving Paschal to find writing materials and to state

laboriously, through the unaccustomed medium of quill pen and blue foolscap, what he had overheard outside the window a short time before, Captain Ford sent a servant for his horse, and then galloped as fast as he could, across the Vale of Avoca and through New Windsor, to seek an interview with fair Peggy, in order to avert, if possible, the threatened calamity.

"I will not ask her to tell me her secrets, or her father's," he said to himself. "I will merely hint at the rumors and pretend to scoff at the credulity of these country boors. If she lets me see that she has her suspicions, I may gain an opportunity to help her out of a difficulty ; if, on the contrary, she shows girlish ignorance only, I shall be fully justified in trying to prevent the search."

No one will doubt that this was a wise plan ; but, alas ! what man, however brave or bold, ever outwitted a woman ?

Margaret was found in the garden, sitting under the tree which was supposed to locate the hidden treasure. She was bareheaded, leaning easily against the big trunk of the fir. All about her on the ground were the old cones of last year's growth, and over her head, on the long sweeping branches, hung the small tender tassels of green which would harden in another season into like slender brown horns. She had her work-basket in her lap, and a piece of work in her hand that appeared to be one of those old-fashioned samplers we prize so highly today as proofs that we had grandmothers, and industrious ones, too. Upon the coarse, yellow canvas, Margaret was carefully cross-stitching these lines, using a red thread of hair-like fineness and singing as she sewed :

Man's at best a creature frail and vain :  
In knowledge ignorant, in strength but weak ;  
Subject to sorrow, losses, pain ;  
Each storm his state, his mind, his body break.  
And, yet, this sinful creature, frail and vain,  
This lump of wretchedness and sin and sorrow,  
This weather-beaten vessel, wreck't with pain,  
Joys not in hope of an eternal morrow !  
O Time ! the fatal wrack of mortal things,  
That draws oblivion's curtain over kings,  
Their sumptuous monuments, men know them not :  
Their names, without a record, are forgot.

The melody she idly sung matched illy the lugubrious sentiments she worked upon her sampler, for as the rider drew nearer he heard carolled forth :

'Tis Love, 'tis Love,  
That makes the world go round.

Rising hurriedly to welcome her guest, she disclosed in the folds of her scant skirt a well-worn song book. It had a calfskin binding and its leaves were mellowed with age and use. Blushing deeply when she saw Ford's eyes turn upon the volume, she said with considerable embarrassment :

"This was my mother's, sir ; and I have been told she played her own accompaniments on her spinnet, before she was married ; but my father did not care for music. I was looking for some simple song to learn when I sit alone at my sewing."

"I am sure your mother's voice could have been no sweeter than yours,—unless it was a bird that I heard as I rode up."

Ford accompanied his words with a respectful but evident attempt to detain in his keeping the shapely



hand given him in greeting. Margaret, however, quickly withdrew from the slight caress, looking ruefully the while at the ugly black mark her brass thimble had left on one of her long, slender fingers. She let the captain see it, somewhat ostentatiously, fearing, with the sense of shame women of our century rarely know, lest the caller should consider her a bluestocking rather than a housekeeper. Indeed, she had alluded to her dead mother's fondness for music for the same reason. The truth was, she was studying her French lesson for Paschal at the moment of her visitor's somewhat inopportune arrival.

As it happened, however, the astute captain comprehended the whole matter at a single glance, and asked presently: "Will your father permit you to take lessons of this newcomer, Mr. Paschal?"

"I hope so," Margaret answered, pausing to bite off a scarlet thread with her sharp, white front teeth. "I want to so much; and all the girls are to study with him but me."

"Does your father specially object to French?"

"Oh, no! Only he says he has no money; but——"

"But what, Miss Ettrick?"

"Perhaps I should not tell you, for Mr. Paschal told me in confidence——"

"In confidence," sighed Ford to himself. "What unheard-of impudence after an hour's acquaintance!"

"He was so kind," continued Margaret, "that when he knew I wanted to learn—and he is sure I will not be a dunce—he promised to take his pay out of the garden——"

"Out of the garden!"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he mean?"

"He meant what he said, sir." This somewhat haughtily. "And he can say pretty things better than some other 'people,'" she added, with a laugh; "and he says, too, that each time he comes, if I will give him a bunch of flowers or one from my belt, for he loves flowers,"—the captain almost groaned aloud,—"he will be twice paid."

"Does your father know of this arrangement?" the irate American officer now asked, all his boasted tact deserting him at the crucial moment.

For reply, the girl, who had told this piece of silly gallantry purely to stimulate her present companion to like acts, now puzzled at the storm she had awakened, rose from the ground, forgetful of her work, and said with a haughtiness she was far from feeling: "Sir, what my father approves or disapproves is strictly his affair and mine. We do not ask the advice of strangers."

"Miss Ettrick, I am not a 'stranger.' I have known you a year, while the man who called here last night you have seen but once."

"Twice, sir," she replied, dropping a saucy curtsy. "He rises earlier than the American officers, and has already done me the honor of calling this morning." She made another mocking reverence, and then, as Chloe with a beckoning black forefinger appeared in the doorway, ran up the ungravelled path towards the house without more words.

The discomfited captain untied his horse,—to whom the call had been exceptionally agreeable, on account of the quantity of bark he had gnawed from the tree to which he had been fastened,—and soon both man and beast had galloped out of sight.

"*To be paid out of the garden,*" Jonathan Ford re-

peated with emphasis. Did the girl wilfully mislead him, or was she herself misled? Either possibility was objectionable, and for once plain Jonathan had a poor appetite for the morning meal which awaited him at the Hasbrouck House.

An hour later he stood in General Washington's office, prepared to obey, soldier-like, whatever commands should be laid upon him. The General looked up as he entered, and, laying aside the papers concerning the Huddy affair with which his mind had been occupied, he entered immediately into the business of the moment. He was worn with much hard thinking, but the glance he gave the officer before him was as full of enthusiasm as if the discussion of Ettrick and his hidden treasure had been the one matter of the day. This power of concentration,—the sure proof of genius,—the ability to abstract his mind from all but the duty of the moment, the seeing of each necessity in its true perspective, seems to have been Washington's marked characteristic ; and now he spoke of the finding of a paltry sum in a Tory's garden as if it were of national importance. He held in his hand the document so laboriously prepared by Paschal, of which it is a thousand pities no copy can be found in the archives of the Hasbrouck House. The original must now be yellow and the ink faded ; yet one would like to see the curious and altogether ingenious statement that the spy made to further his plans by making stronger Washington's confidence in him, and—to vex Captain Ford.

All was arranged as Paschal hoped ; as Ford feared. A searching party, with the unwilling captain at the head, was ordered for the same evening, and then, alas for lovers' sighs, a soldier can but do his duty !

"I should be best pleased," Washington said, finally,

after giving his brief commands, "if the expedition is conducted as quietly as may be and with such decent order as you can preserve."

"Your wishes shall be obeyed, sir," responded Ford, and withdrew.

## CHAPTER XII

### WHO SEEKS FINDS


THE rain was falling softly : a soothing April shower. Patter, patter, patter, on the shingles over sweet Peggy's head ; her lullaby to sleep. Evening prayers said ; the final meal of ale and cheese eaten ; the slaves sent to their quarters in the rear ; Mr. Ettrick's last pipe smoked and now silence, save for the steady drip, drip, drip of the rain-drops, and the gentle echoing answer of the opening leaves of the trees. Everything and everybody had said good-night, yet Margaret was wide awake. A curious mischance at her toilet had disturbed her ; she had torn the string off her nightcap, and could not find her "housewife," as the old-fashioned silk-lined morocco rolls for sewing materials used to be called,—and what could the most skilful fingers do without scissors, thimble, thread, or needles? In despair, she searched every corner of her little bedroom, when, suddenly, with a blush at her forgetfulness, she remembered the stitches taken on her sampler in the garden, under the fir-tree.

The rain fell steadily, but its sound no longer soothed the thrifty woman, who thought each splash of water was soaking her pretty red housewife past repair. In an agony of regret over her carelessness, fearful of

Chloe's scolding and her father's refusal to make good her loss, with bold resolve, she threw a gayly figured calico double-gown over her white nightdress and ran barefooted down the staircase, through the sanded hall, out into the dark garden. There, without the light of moon or star, she groped vainly for her lost treasure, when suddenly she was surprised and disconcerted by the trampling sound of horses' feet. Supposing the noise to come from some late roisterers, she hid herself quickly in the hollow trunk of an old beech—a safe retreat familiar from childhood—to wait with what patience and courage she possessed till the men passed along the lane. To her horror the party halted at her father's gate and dismounted. They tied their horses in primitive fashion to the fence, then, without delay, made their way into the garden by the side of the house. But the girl dared not cry aloud for help lest she be discovered; and indeed she had no power left for crying aloud.

"Hold, there!" said a familiar voice. "No rudeness, boys! Here's the spot. Now make haste!"

Ah, poor Peggy! "The spot" was close by the tree in which she was hiding. She remembered the delicious tremors associated with the games of hide-and-seek she had played in old times here with Maria Col-den and Sallie Jansen inside the same hollow beech; but there was nothing delicious about the fright which now made her limbs to tremble so that she feared lest she should fall forward upon the ground and be seen by the rough men. Was it Captain Ford's voice she heard? Oh, the shame of it! Would he suppose her keeping a tryst with some one? With whom? She blushed at the thought, she who had never kept a tryst in her life, who had felt in these last few days a



new longing in her soul to love and to be loved by a man. She wished she had not teased poor Ford so unmercifully about the Frenchman, and wondered if the latter were also of the searching party. To add to her alarm, she found that the rain had stopped, and the figures upon her gown could be seen. She looked down upon her flowered calico wrapper and her bare feet and blushed.

"Fowler, you dig a little here ; and you, Denton, stand by."

"Shall I root up the posies?"

"Dig, Fowler ; don't talk."

"May we serenade the fair maiden, Captain?" asked another ; "or do we fear to wake Miss Ettrick from her beauty sleep?"

"Silence, sir," was the stern reproof ; but it failed to abash the boys, who were filled to overflowing with the excitement of the hour. Other jests more or less rude followed, while the digging went on, first in one place, then in another, and all the while poor Margaret, powerless to avert the threatened calamity, stood rigid inside the tree trunk, by turns frightened and angry at the depredations.

"Here's a housewife," cried one of the men, at length, holding the little morocco case up to view.

"I will take it home and give it to my wife,—when I am lucky enough to have one."

"Faith, Dick, she'll stick you with the scissors."

"Or prick you with a pin !"

"Or bleed you with her bodkin !"

"Drat the blamed thing!" and Peggy's housewife was contemptuously pitched away.

There was more frolicking, a little profanity and much joking, together with considerable conjecture as

to the exact locality of the box ; while above all, ever and anon, came Ford's repressing voice ordering the men to work and be quiet.

"I wish the General had sent the little Frenchman to command us tonight," one fellow muttered, after receiving a sharp rebuff for his trifling.

"The captain is snappish, for the gold belongs to his sweetheart's father, you know," was the whispered response ; "so no wonder he acts like a doodle at such distasteful work ; d'ye see?" There was considerable repressed laughter at this sally, since order was poorly preserved at the best in these times, and discipline was lax.

"He'd rather have her smile than the shine of the old man's gold," whispered another.

"Have you seen her?"

"Come, boys, quit work if you find nothing," interrupted Ford with assumed indifference.

The suggestion from their leader put the soldiers on their metal, and in less than five minutes there was a round oath from a man who had struck something hard with his spade.

"Have you found it?" This from several at once.

"That is what I have, I am thinking." The Columbus was an Irishman, and his brogue waxed stronger in his excitement.

"Blamed if he hasn't found it !" exclaimed one who had been incredulous.

"What will the old man say when he finds the hole?" said another.

"He can plant a tree in it."

"Or a liberty pole."

"Hush, boys," said Ford, entering into the excitement of the occasion ; "can't you lift it out?"

They all gathered about the fortunate man and watched him earnestly, as he completely uncovered the box and handed it to Ford, confident of reward. "Jove, but it's heavy!" he said, as he gave it up most reluctantly, and, to his disappointment, received the command: "Follow the rest of the men back, and we will consider in the morning what shall be given you as discoverer."

The men, obedient to orders, mounted and rode away; Captain Ford bearing the unopened tin box. He threw one backward glance at the garden he had so unwillingly rifled,—a glance that disclosed to his astonished eyes a lovely vision of a second St. Margaret, stepping forth from a beech-tree's trunk instead of a dead dragon's body, her eyes wide with fright, her fair hair falling over her half-clad form. Her figure was illumined by a sudden ray of moonlight which fell through a rift in the darkened sky.

"Ride on, boys," was the prompt command; "we must reach Newburgh before midnight."

Ford did not turn his head for a second glance, although cut to the heart to think of his cruelly compromised position in the eyes of the one he would do anything to serve. To think, moreover, that he had stood so close by her side and knew it not; that he could have touched her with his hand; could have taken her in his arms and held her fast; could have asked her to be his wife then and there; could perhaps have won her! He loved her, and yet he suddenly realized that he had never been farther removed from the possible possession of her than now.

"Make speed, boys," he commanded aloud; while to himself, ignorant of the girl's reason for hiding, yet trusting her as a man must ever trust the



woman he wishes to make his wife, he said, "God bless her!"

From her chamber window Peggy heard far up the lane the singing of a song as old as Shakespeare and as new as the newest college boy :

Landlord, fill the flowing bowl  
Until it doth run over ;  
For tonight we'll merry, merry be,  
And tomorrow we'll be sober.

To describe the rage of Mr. Ettrick in the morning, when he discovered his loss, would require the fluent use of several languages. In truth, he was acting a part, for Paschal had prepared his mind for the raid, promising to make good the money taken, and, moreover, he had overheard the frolicking of the marauding soldiers beneath his windows as plainly as Margaret had seen them from her hiding-place in the tree trunk ; nevertheless, such is the power of dissimulation, even in the innermost domestic circle, that no one would have guessed the concealed feelings of these two members of one family.

"Well, I haven't much of an opinion of your captain," said Ettrick, finally, at the close of a long scolding harangue which followed upon a fruitless search for the missing treasure.

"I told you before he was not *my* captain, father," Peggy answered, her cheeks aflame at the remembrance of the theft she had seen perpetrated ; then asked, with a woman's inborn love of hedging a situation :

"Why do you say Captain Ford stole the money?"

"Who else?"

The girl was silent. She had no reason to throw the blame upon the Frenchman, yet for an instant she

felt tempted to do so. Jonathan Ford was, as he himself had said, a friend of a year's standing, while Louis Paschal had known her but a few days. She compared the length of the time she had known the two, self-accused. There is a subtle difference, however, between ten minutes of happiness and ten minutes by the clock.

"I don't care," she said, softly; "he is so nice!" without indicating to which man she referred. "I wish he would come again," and she sighed, but not for the lost treasure.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN THE GLEN

MARGARET ETRICK was in the glen through which ran Murderer's Creek, picking mint for a mutton roast. It was several days after the loss of the treasure from the garden, and the young girl had so many experiences to think over that it is to be feared Chloe had to wait a long while for the greens her rich sauce required. Indeed, the fair herb-gatherer was resting against the tall trunk of a North River cedar, absolutely idle. Presently she drew a big book from out the covered basket which hung on her arm and began to study diligently what proved to be a dictionary of flowers.

This language of love tokens, arranged from the flowers in a lady's garden, was a device contrived by sweethearts in the dark ages, when men feared to allow women the privilege of learning to read, lest they neglect the graver duties of domestic life. Today, notwith-

standing the higher education, the language has not become obsolete with lovers.

The volume in question was a handsome quarto, bound in green vellum,—one of the class dearly prized by an earlier generation, and considered to embody all that was refined in literature. It was of the Ladies' Annual or Gift Book Series,—a present that a gallant gentleman might with propriety give to any discreet female of his acquaintance without fear of giving himself with it, while the discreet female might safely accept the offering with the same platonic understanding.

A hundred years ago books were less common than now, and consequently more highly prized, since the cost was not inconsiderable. The one Miss Ettrick studied had been ordered by Jonathan Ford for her from a publisher in Boston, who dryly said to his wife, "The captain is extravagant ; but if he gets the girl he will get back his money, an' if he loses one he loses t'other. The Lord Almighty pity fools in love."

So the "Dictionary of Flowers," with its language more lasting than flowers, came safely by the overland route, reaching Newburgh by special messenger. It was formally presented to Miss Peggy in the presence of her father, who was hardly more disdainful than the young lady herself. Poor Ford ! He saw his precious token placed on the marble-topped centre-table in the Ettrick parlor ; he heard himself coldly thanked, and—that was all. Oh, impotent love token ! Why had the giver imagined a voiceless book would speak words the giver dared not utter ? On a certain leaf—a fly-leaf of tinted paper ; for after this curious fashion were these Annuals most frequently devised—he had laboriously copied the whole of the following poem, attributed to Thomas Jefferson and addressed to some other

lovely Peggy,—surely to no one fairer than the one  
whom the luckless captain adored :

LOVELY PEGGY.

Once more I'll tune the vocal shell,  
To hills and dales my passion tell,  
A flame which time can never quell,  
That burns for lovely Peggy !

The greater bards the lyre should hit,—  
For, say, what subject is more fit  
Than to reward the sparkling wit  
And bloom of lovely Peggy ?

The sun, first rising in the morn,  
That paints the dew-besparkled thorn,  
Does not so much the day adorn,  
As does my lovely Peggy !

As when in Thetis' lap to rest  
He streaks with gold the ruddy west,  
He's not so beauteous at his best,  
As is my lovely Peggy !

With her, a cottage would delight,—  
All's happy when she's in my sight ;  
But when she's gone 'tis endless night,—  
All's dark without my Peggy !

The zephyr's air, the violet blows,  
Or breath upon the damask rose,  
He does not half the sweets disclose  
That does my lovely Peggy !

While bees from flower to flower still rove,  
And linnets warble through the grove,  
Or stately swan the waters love,—  
So long shall I love Peggy !

And when death, with his pointed dart,  
Shall strike the blow that rives my heart,  
My words shall be, when I depart,  
Adieu, my lovely Peggy !

Alas ! alas ! Margaret never read the stilted rhymes till Sallie Jansen, in looking for a pretty shade of paper on which to place her own autograph, found them by merest chance, when the two heartless girls giggled themselves half into hysterics over the absurdity of their aptness.

Maria Colden, also, wrote her name on a pink page near Sallie's, and then for a time—since all this occurred the previous autumn—the book was forgotten, till at the close of a French lesson Paschal begged to add a sentiment. These lessons had been carried on most happily in the garden, but this fair, blue-eyed April morning, when Peggy's duties took her into the glen mint gathering, a rendezvous was there appointed that she was eager to keep. The Frenchman had promised to come on a Monday, but Dinah had detained Margaret with some spinning. On Tuesday, General Washington had detained Paschal ; but now, on Wednesday, the girl was here waiting for the welcome sound of the paddle in the water. It had been agreed between the lovers—for such the two had become, unconsciously to one at least—that to avoid observation Paschal should come down the river in a canoe, since the lane by the Ettrick House was so often used by soldiers going to the Forge.

Margaret knew she had wandered farther from home than was wise, yet her courage was good. Something within her breast, moreover, constantly whispered caution ; but all the while the fascinations of the new-comer toppled over her strongest resolutions to be discreet. She trusted him, and trust between a man and woman has ever a wide margin of meaning. Strangely enough, her father—whose treatment of the American officer since the raid on his garden had been most un-

friendly—laid no embargo on her growing intimacy with this Frenchman. Indeed, if Miss Ettrick needed a protector she had best look within rather than without. Sometimes she almost wished she had less conscience, so that she might let circumstances take their course and enjoy to the full the new and passionate delight. If she thus sinned against her better self, she knew it not in her untried innocence. She excused herself for this sudden intimacy on the seemingly all-sufficient ground of her loneliness. Her father was an old and disappointed man, whose life was closing before his daughter's had fairly begun. All the blood in her veins boiled at his pessimism. She was alive, and she was angry at him for talking as if she must expect to die here in Ettrick Grove without seeing or knowing of aught else in the wide world.

There was one way out of the difficulty. If she married the American officer, if—if—? And while she hesitated, considering this possibility, Louis Paschal knocked at her door, embodying her whole ideal of an accomplished gentleman,—of more, of a real, living man,—and when he related tales of France and New York the charm was complete.

Waiting for him, this April morning, all these thoughts in her heart, she heard the sound of a paddle in the water and looked up, a welcoming smile on her parted lips, the light that never was on sea or land in the dilated pupils of her big brown eyes.

## CHAPTER XIV

## GATHERING MINT AND EXPERIENCE

A MORE romantic rendezvous could hardly have been chosen than this one near the mouth of Murderer's Creek.

Margaret was dressed in the quaint fashion of the last century ; a folded kerchief about her throat, yellow nankeen mittens on her hands, a calico sunbonnet on her head, and a short woollen skirt completing a costume the furthest removed from picturesque ; yet the man, who took one of the ugly mittens in his warm grasp and gently drew the girl's tall form towards his own more slightly built figure, saw nothing about the woman waiting for his coming but winsome grace. Every action pleased him, since all were of unstudied simplicity ; even her frank drawing off of her nankeen mitten that she might feel his caressing clasp.

For a moment the two stood side by side, she palpitating with excitement, he alert to see that no one watched them.

"I thought you had something to tell me," Peggy said, presently, when the greeting could no longer be prolonged, and propriety suggested she should withdraw her fingers from his clinging grasp. His palm was stained and perfumed with a stalk of mint she had been holding ; but he remembered, long after the green mark was washed off, the timidity of the girl's touch.

"I have something to tell you each time I see you," he whispered, in a tone which might mean everything or nothing. He drew her towards him by an irresist-

ible coaxing gesture, and they seated themselves, pupil and erstwhile teacher, side by side on the ground.

"His Excellency breakfasted this morning off fried eggs," said Paschal, disappointingly, "which that ace of spades, his black servant, Bill, brought him from somewhere in the country. If you have eggs to sell, Miss Ettrick, General Washington pays well in salt, they tell me. Good money is scarce, but they have laid in a whole butt of salt, to use in exchange for eggs."

"People tell silly stories about the doings at the Hasbrouck House," Peggy answered, looking none the less pretty as she spoke because a certain shadow of restless discontent clouded her clear eyes. She was sitting by the Frenchman's side, yet she was not perfectly happy. "It seems to me folks gossip just because nothing happens anywhere," she added, surprising and freshly fascinating the Frenchman by this unexpected exhibition of childish petulance. Much had happened in his life—too much—and the girl's complaint amused him by its novelty.

"You can sympathize with the poor soldiers," Paschal answered; "I am told they are dangerously discontented. You are to be trusted, I know, when I whisper to you that there is a rumor afloat that anonymous letters are shortly to be sent to Congress, to compel it by threats to pay the army. The Commander will hardly approve, but, truly, the delay has been scandalous."

Peggy actually yawned. Politics did not greatly interest her at the moment; for she had not kept this appointment that they might waste the time with such topics.

"We hear nothing of such things," she said, po-



lately ; " my father does not encourage talk among the slaves, and we see no outsiders. He reads the old numbers of ' Rivington's Gazette,' when he cannot borrow new ones."

" He reads the ' Gazette,' does he?" Paschal asked in surprise, then, as if to hide his too frank expression, he opened the " Flora" and began turning its tinted leaves, stopping now and again to smile at an extract or original sentiment. Peggy watched him admiringly. He passed over the lines to her lovely namesake with a sneer which he scarcely took the trouble to conceal, but paused a long time when he came to some verses addressed to W . . . sh . . . n.."

TO W . . . SH . . . N.

Wilt thou, great chief of Freedom's lawless sons,  
Great Captain of the Western Gothic Huns ;  
Wilt thou, for once, permit a private man  
To parley with thee, and thy conduct scan?  
At reason's bar hath Cataline been heard ;  
At reason's bar e'en Cromwell hath appeared ;  
Successless or successful, all must stand  
At her tribunal and hold up his hand.  
Severe, but just, the case she fairly states,  
And fame or infamy her sentence waits.  
Hear the indictment, Washington, at large,  
Attend and listen to the solemn charge :  
Thou hast supported an atrocious cause,  
Against thy king, thy country, and thy laws,  
Committed perjury, encouraged lies,  
Forced conscience, broken the most sacred ties ;  
Myriads of wives and fathers at thy hand  
Their slaughtered husbands, slaughtered sons, demand.  
That pastures hear no more the lowing kine,  
That towns are desolate, all, all is thine.  
The frequent sacrilege that pained my sight,  
The blasphemies my pen abhors to write,

Innumerable crimes on thee must fall,  
For thou defendest, thou maintainest all.  
Wilt thou pretend that Britain is in fault?  
In reason's court a falsehood counts for naught.

"How handsomely your father writes," he said.  
"Does he make his own pens?"

"Always," answered the daughter, falling at once into the trap set for her. "It has been his habit for years back; and, besides, he says he cannot afford to buy of the booksellers now. But, oh, dear!" she faltered, suddenly recollecting the family secret of disloyalty; "when he copied that, he did not think I would let any one see it. Please don't tell."

"Have I the honor, the happiness, to share a secret with you, Miss Margaret?"

"To protect my father! If it were known that he was a Tory we would lose everything. We have lived here all my life, and had no fear till the army came to New Windsor. That was last year, you know. Then, when General Washington returned early this month to Newburgh, all our old anxieties came back. It is dreadful for my father; but I was brought up here, and although I have been taught to love the mother country, yet, after all, this is my native land, and I love it best." She spoke in a whisper, but her face when she lifted it to Paschal's was all aglow with feeling.

"I envy your native land," he replied with significance; then, as if to qualify his protestation, added, "I am, as you know, part French and part Indian. I have hot passions and a strong right arm." Somehow, the slenderly formed though sinewy arm he raised in gesture belied the pride of his boast; but this was before

the days of athletes, and Peggy liked him none the less on account of his unusual fragility. "Yet I am lonesome," he added, "and truly have no country,—no one to love." It was an old plea. Even then it was not quite new; but the "old, old story" has always had charms, and the woman at the man's side lent the ever-ready ear.

"What is it that I shall write, Mam'selle?" he asked, presently, taking the big book from Margaret's hands.

"Anything that you choose; only please write in English, as I am so dull yet about making out anything French." In truth, Peggy feared that she had lost much that was sweetly valuable in the Frenchman's interesting conversation, owing to his habit of speaking in his native tongue whenever he became excited.

"But I am to teach you the musical, the poetical French, am I not?"

"Yes; but——"

"You should say *mais oui*," he interrupted.

"May I ask one little question in English?" she begged, prettily.

"As many as you wish; but I will not promise to answer them all."

"Is French poetical?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because, if it is, I—I——"

"What?"

"I won't like it," and a tear stole down Peggy's pretty cheek from sheer disappointment.

"Don't, please don't," protested Paschal. "Poetry should bring smiles instead of tears."

"But it never does," said Peggy, earnestly, as she recalled the lugubrious verses on her sampler.

"Then you do not know the true poetry. I will

teach you. Poetry is the language of the unseen. The soul is invisible, but it has a voice in the eye and the hand."

Paschal picked up one of her hands and gently chafed it, while the deep sympathy of his eyes, as he looked into her own, was gladly welcomed by the artless girl.

"And only poetry can tell the story. Prose is too unsympathetic; it is not refined enough to describe anything so beautiful."

Peggy's face glowed with responsive pleasure.

"Everything which we call 'dumb' has a voice,—the blue flowers below and the blue sky above. We are never alone, for everything speaks to us. It is we, instead, who are dumb."

"And this is poetry," responded Peggy with delight, as she heard reflections in which she had often indulged expressed in words.

"It is the real world—the unseen world—that gives us pleasure," continued Paschal. "What we see of these trees and flowers are only the bodies of beautiful lives within. Some are brave and strong, and would lift us up in their huge branches and tell us stories of endurance, while the dear and lovely blooms of only a day's life, over which we bend, urge us to make life beautiful, since it is so brief."

"If you know any poetry," said Peggy, "which expresses these beautiful thoughts, please do write it in my album."

"I do; but it is French."

"Never mind. If you will teach me, I will learn it."

Thus bidden, Paschal released Peggy's hand and wrote the following:

## UNE VOIX.

Ecoute, au fond des bois,  
Murmurer une voix :  
Rappelle-toi.

Ecoute, dans la nuit,  
Une voix qui gémit :  
Rappelle-toi.

Tant que mon cœur battra,  
Toujours il te dira :  
Rappelle-toi.

"I am afraid I am not clever enough to understand it," Margaret said, peeping over his shoulder as he finished writing, and knitting her pretty brows in despair. "I have only read a very little poetry from some old books in a trunk in the attic. My father thinks it silly. Don't think me stupid, but please tell me what it means."

"Some time," replied Paschal, who suddenly appeared conscious of Peggy's errand. "Permit me to assist you in gathering mint for your roast. Tonight, I shall think of you at your table as you are serving it to Monsieur your father, while I, *hélas*, am not so fortunate as to be at your side."

"I have heard you have great dinners in Newburgh," was the timid response. Miss Ettrick was courageous, but she dared not invite a guest to her father's house in any impromptu fashion. "Do not all the officers appear in full dress, and is not Mrs. Washington very ceremonious?" she asked.

"Full dress is required; but the fare is simple, almost as plain as in the barracks. They are rather formal when dining, but are often merry at the nine o'clock supper."

The mint-gathering continued in silence after this,

and at last, when the basket was well filled, Peggy be-thought herself of returning home.

"Thank you for your help," she said, gratefully, then, with a look of most flattering and quite unmistakable sadness, added, "I am sorry to hurry away, but Chloe wants the mint. I will study over the verses you so kindly wrote for me. Good-by!" She gave him both hands this time, and, being quite as tall as he, in looking him straight in the eyes he found her face on a level with his and invitingly near.

"Margaret," he said, caressingly, and she thought his clear voice the sweetest she had ever heard in all her life, "do you love the Yankee officer who gave you this book?"

The question was not only abrupt and unexpected, but most disappointing, and the girl answered, hastily: "How dare you pry into my private affairs, sir? You are worse than the old women on the Glebe in Newburgh, who sit all day, Maria Colden says, gossiping about herself and Sallie and the other girls in the village."

She was near tears, and there was real pity now in Paschal's reply: "Pardon me, dear one," here he lightly touched his lips to the soft cheek half turned towards him and temptingly suggestive of a kiss; "I ask this question only because I like you very, very much, and I think you like me. Tell me, do you, do you like me as I like you—very, very dearly?"

"I do, I do; indeed I do," confessed poor Peggy, now carried far beyond herself and frankly honest. She had been told, all girls have been told, that one must hide one's love from a man; yet passion in man or woman has power beyond conventionality, and more is the pity.

"Do you really like me a little?" she questioned in turn, a strange feeling swelling in her breast and making her heart beat hard against his arm. For reply, her flushed face was lifted to his pale one and held between his slender hands, next his own, till their lips met.

"Margaret, I love you," he said, simply; then, fairly pushing her away, added, "but my love can do you no good. Forget me, and marry some one who will never love you half as well as I love you this minute."

"I will never forget you," cried the girl, half exultant, half disappointed. "I will never love any one else half so well, and I thank God for sending into my life such a beautiful thing as your love!"

She was standing close by him, all her soul in her eyes, her heart still thumping furiously against her bodice, her bosom rising and falling beneath the folded kerchief which the Frenchman's caress had partly disordered. It seemed as if it would have been impossible for a man to withstand a woman so palpably won, had she even been far less winsome than Margaret Ettrick; yet Louis Paschal, who had quite recovered his composure, said, as he drew away from her: "Mine is an equivocal position, *joli cœur*; try not to love me. I am sorry for you, but I have seen much more of life than you have. Go home to the old father, and if you can love an honest Yankee, it will be best. Do not think too much of me; think of some one who can make you happy and useful. I am sure you will, because you are good and sweet. Good-by!"

He was leaving her alone on the beach, when, just as he bent over to loosen the canoe that he had moored among the rushes on the shore, he felt her touch again on his shoulder. It reminded him, someway, of the

flutter of a bird's heart that he had felt years before on the palm of his hand,—a bird he had taken from a nest, a bird that had not yet learned to fly.

"Forgive my detaining you," Peggy said, with a humility quite unusual to her, for in the blindness of her passion she had scarcely understood his half repulse, "but perhaps you do not know the story the Indians—your own people—tell about this glen?"

"I have heard something of a massacre hereabouts," Paschal answered, with a nervous shrug of his whole body, considerably disturbed by the ill-omened allusion at so happy a moment. He had been acting a part so far, yet Margaret's fervor had warmed his impressionable nature. "Why speak of it now?" he asked. "Are you afraid?"

"No, indeed," was the proud reply; "it happened long ago. I spoke of it because—because——" She hesitated; then taking both the Frenchman's hands in her own laid them on her breast, saying, in a manner not to be mistaken, "The woman who was tomahawked had been warned by a chief called Naoman, whom she promised not to betray. She kept her word; and although he confessed at the last moment, he, too, was killed. Her faithfulness was of no account, yet I was always glad she was true."

"It was surely noble," Paschal said; "but why do you tell me now?"

"I tell it to you now because, as I stand here where she stood, I want to promise to be true to you as this woman was to Naoman. I think—I am sure she loved him." Here Margaret Ettrick suddenly hid her face on the man's shoulder, and, to his surprise, kissed him timidly on his thin, brown cheek. "I love you," she repeated. "I am glad to say it, and if ever I can



help you, live for you, or die for you, let me do it !”

“No, never, never, dear one,” the Frenchman replied, as he mentally registered a vow before high heaven that, whatever plans he formed with her father, Margaret should be exempt from risk, danger, and disgrace. Alas ! that it is so difficult to hold “heights which the soul hath power to gain.”

In another minute he was away, and Peggy was left alone with her new thoughts. The solitary walk home under the flickering shadows was dreamlike ; beneath her feet the white anemones starred the woodland path ; above her head the nesting birds in the budding branches ; in her heart joy and mystery.

Chloe met her at the door in a fretful humor about the mint. She saw around the porch the tracks of a horse's feet, and her father teasingly taunted her about losing a call from Captain Ford.

“He missed his stirrup-cup more than he missed you, I fancy,” Ettrick added, sneeringly ; “but I am too poor to give drink to every American officer who rides by. Too poor, my girl, too poor !”

His words fell on deaf ears, for her thoughts were with the Frenchman, and she was quite indifferent to all else. One thing puzzled her : why should Paschal tell her to marry a Yankee at the moment of confessing his own love ? She determined she would marry no one.

## CHAPTER XV

### A LOVERS' QUARREL

It rained. It rained hard. It had rained the night before, the day before ; it was raining still ; it looked as if it would rain tomorrow. The clouds were gray and low ; the wind howled, and yet it was the evening of May Day. No flower-crowned May Queen had danced past the small-paned window through which Lucy Knox was looking, nor had there been the faintest sound of music or sight of merry-hearted children playing around a Maypole. This had been no English holiday, no holiday whatever, but moving day, even in the wilderness of the New World, and on this dreary afternoon, General and Mrs. Knox had taken up their abode near New Windsor at the Ellison House, where Generals Knox and Greene had sojourned more than once in previous years.

This house stood then, as now, about four and a half miles southwest of Newburgh, on the banks of the well-known Silver Stream, at a point where its waters are gathered into a pond by a dam across the narrow valley, to give power to an old mill once situated by the deep glen nearby. The ancient mansion is thoroughly typical of that period, and the visitor, passing through its door—which opens in upper and lower halves—and walking through its low, beamed-ceilinged rooms, or looking through the small, high windows, feels almost personally acquainted with those whose names are familiar to every school-child, but who there ate and drank like ordinary mortals.

It is a favorite ramble of people visiting this interesting place, now generally known as the Knox Head-quarter House, to explore the glen which is entered just below the pond. Passing the ruins of the old mill, one clammers down over the smaller rocks and around the great boulders ; under the overhanging trees ; following the course of Silver Stream, until it merges into Murderer's Creek a half-mile below. Thence one may follow down the latter stream, with its noisy rapids and high, picturesque banks, past a cove between two boulders—the site of an old still-house of early days—on another half-mile, to the present village of Moodna, among whose houses still remains the one which was once the residence of Mr. Ettrick of our story.

Few persons at that time ventured into the glen below the mill, as the name of Murderer's Creek filled the superstitious imagination of the simple folk with an indefinite dread. The existence of the little cabin, where spirits were secretly distilled at night, was scarcely known ; and for the most obvious of reasons those who did know of the still, encouraged the general belief that the ravine was haunted.

Inside the Ellison House, while the storm raged, General Knox and his wife sat by a wood fire, enjoying the warmth on account of the cosy contrast with the chill outside and the general feeling of discomfort in nature.

General Knox was a large man, above middle stature, slightly bow-legged from much sitting in the saddle. He wore his hair short in front, powdered and queued ; and below his somewhat low forehead his small dark eyes shone brilliantly. Just now his wife, a bright little brunette, whose wit and courage ever enlivened his

darkest hours, held one of her husband's hands,—the wounded left one, which he always kept covered in a black silk handkerchief, that no one might see its mutilation. After a long and tiresome day of unpacking, Mrs. Lucy was as prettily dressed for the evening, as if expecting a dinner company. Her hair was in curl, her eyes bright, her cheeks rosy, her red lips curved into a bewitching smile. Why, she was not only smiling on this dreary, wet New Windsor world, she was actually laughing, and laughing right noisily, too !

General Knox looked up at the unexpected sound. He had proved himself a brave soldier ; he was a giant of a fellow, showing his vigorous Scotch-Irish ancestry in every line of his strong figure ; he ate well, he slept well, he was a good lover and a faithful husband ; yet his wife's distinctly cheerful laughter disturbed him. Presently he turned his huge head towards her, and said, without special preface, as if thinking aloud for her edification and better understanding of the new situation to which she had come :

"Lucy, do you know that the army is a magazine which needs only a torch at the right place to produce a terrible explosion?"

"Fear nothing, Henry," was the ready reply as she still fondled the poor maimed hand ; "these showers with which Providence has favored us will prove sufficient, I am sure, to quench any flame." She rose to her feet, as she spoke, and shook out her many ringlets with a certain coquetry and daintiness that few wives think worth while maintaining after a half-dozen years of humdrum married life. Lucy Knox, however, found nothing in life humdrum. To her, everything was worth while, and her enthusiasm was always contagious. She knew the limitations of life in the country, for

she had lived here before. She remembered that the low sloping roof of the old house leaked, and she had reason to fear fevers from the close proximity of the mill-pond ; while the endless sound of the stream in the ravine, rushing over the rocks in the glen at the south of the garden, was not conducive to slumber or a quiet night's rest. She had been warned concerning the possible attack of neighboring Indians, who could reach the house by the way of the glen from the river, and yet she could laugh aloud.

"Lucy," replied her husband, with a suspicion of sternness in his full, loud voice,—a voice whose deep tones sounded clear above the downpouring of the rain and the steady pattering on the mossy shingled roof, and was not to be diverted even by the old elm tree, swayed by the high wind, which struck its heavy branches against the old house,—“it is no laughing matter, my dear.”

Knox was speaking of the military situation, not of the noisy elm-tree, yet his listener just then felt rather more afraid of the storm than of the vaguely hinted danger in the army. She stepped close up to the general, and, putting her arms about him with the sense of possession that only a woman who is a wife can feel, leaned her pretty, dainty face against his huge one, and said : “Henry, listen to me, not to your own fears. It is raining, dear, but the sun shines behind the clouds, and God is in heaven just the same.”

This sudden seriousness did not surprise him, for he knew Lucy's high spirits and courage were born of stronger stuff than frivolous ignorance ; yet, even while he kissed her affectionately, he answered, without enthusiasm, “Heaven seems to me farther off than hell just now.”

His wife did not take her arms from off his neck at these profane words, but there was a note of reproach in her voice as she said, reprovingly, "Henry!"

"Yes," he continued, "I say it and I mean it. You know we heard reports yesterday of that dangerous mutiny among the soldiers of one of the regiments. The scamps conducted the whole affair with such secrecy that it was almost on the point of execution when discovered. Think of such an uprising among the other troops! I dread to look ahead."

"Then look behind, Henry, love, and remember how from the day you and I joined the army," here she gave his poor hand a tiny pressure, "from the moment I determined to leave my father's house for the sake of—well, we will call it for the sake of American liberty,"—here there was a little peeping at the great military husband between some dark curling lashes,—“we have been led from victory to victory. Why should we be discouraged now when the end is almost in sight, we who have suffered so much, endured so much.” Here she broke down unexpectedly and began to cry.

"Tired little woman!" said the husband, caressingly; "and are you sorry you gave up King George's cause for a poor bookseller? Don't answer me, dear; I am afraid I have made you sacrifice too much. You have worked too hard today getting things settled. These country servants are worse than nothing at all."

"I need not wait till I am rested to tell you that I have never been sorry a moment that I hid your sword in the folds of my best petticoat and followed you out of Boston the day after the battle of Lexington, dear husband," was the prompt reply, spoken low in the general's ear, yet heard above the rustling of the

many starched shirt ruffles on which the wife's head rested.

"Pardon!" came from a new voice, as Major Tilghman was shown into the room. He was soaked with the rain through which he had ridden from the Hasbrouck House to welcome the new-comers.

The married lovers had the grace to cease their confidences at this interruption, and General Knox assumed his stiff, military attitude, while his wife, dropping a graceful curtsy, came forward with a hospitable greeting.

"You have tired yourself, Major," she said, kindly; "let me send for some hot rum and water. You exposed your health coming down here in the storm. I shall have to scold you as I do the general." She shook a white many-ringed finger at him as she spoke, and then ran lightly out of the room, to return in a few minutes, followed by a black woman, who carried a tray with glasses upon it and a bottle. "Let us drink to the success of the army," she said, as she filled each tumbler. "Come, Major Tilghman; and here's hoping you will soon have a wife and a home of your own."

"Such a hostess as yourself makes me long for such a future, madam," was the gallant reply, which caused Lucy to blush and coquette a little with her tumbler of rum and water, a mixture she did not greatly affect; then, half turning from Major Tilghman and looking coyly at her husband, she said:

"I am sorry you found your host and hostess quarrelling, sir."

"Lucy, my dear!" expostulated Knox, who never grew accustomed to his wife's varying moods. She had thrown Tilghman a glance when she gave him his toddy that would have made a more exacting husband

blind with jealousy, and now she referred to the sweet words which had passed between them as "a quarrel."

"We were speaking of the sad condition of affairs in the army, and I was saying how I dreaded the breaking into mutiny and deplored the discontented spirit among the men," General Knox said, turning from his lively wife to his serious guest.

"You refer to the offering of resolutions to General Washington at West Point concerning Congress. Yes, it is bad indeed," Tilghman answered, putting down the glass he had drained and straightening himself up.

Lucy now slipped away silently, not forgetting to send in a slave with another bottle before she herself stole upstairs to bed, leaving the friends to sit up half the night and fight their battles o'er again.

Mrs. Lucy was no eavesdropper, or she would have heard a precious bit of military gossip that would have made her open her startled eyes wider than did the sound of the swishing elm branches on the roof or the roar of the water in Silver Stream. The concluding words came from Major Tilghman, who said: "And what do you think Washington will say to it?"

"Oh, he will see through it at once," replied General Knox. "Colonel Nicola is the best one to write the letter suggesting it, but General Washington will not be slow to understand matters. Trust him to be wide awake."

"Will he suspect that others have to do with it?"

"Certainly; he will know that Colonel Nicola would not think of suggesting that he should be king unless we all favored the idea."

"Well, what if he does suspect?"

"You will see later. Nicola is coming from Philadelphia, you say, and will prepare the letter over the



river at Steuben's headquarters. He is the best man you could get to do it, but——"

"But what?"

"It won't work. I am with you, however," said Knox. "It will do no harm that I can see." Hearing approaching footsteps, he added in an undertone, "Hush! here comes my wife."

## CHAPTER XVI

### LUCY KNOX HAS A DREAM

THE intruder was Lucy Knox. She had snatched a half-hour's beauty sleep without undressing, and, arising, stood shivering in the doorway, lighted candle in hand, and with her husband's great coat thrown over her dinner toilet,—a veritable Lady Macbeth.

"My wife!" said Knox to Tilghman, as if the words spoke both introduction and apology. He was disconcerted by the interruption, for, although he had talked at great length to his friend earlier in the evening on other matters than the one they were at the moment discussing, he was anxious to prolong the consultation, and felt annoyed at the untimely ending. It may be, however, that Tilghman, on his part, was tired of business and glad to see the pretty Lucy. It would be difficult to say how long the conversation would have continued, as the two men were comfortably seated in armchairs by the fire, glasses and bottles on a small mahogany table between them, had not the hostess made her sudden descent upon them.

Mrs. Knox was a prime favorite, and her teasing

spirit was rarely thought to be out of place, even on occasions like the present.

It is said that even Washington was not averse to listening to her wise and witty counsels, and that her vivacity and personality, which had at first merely attracted him, later gratified and rested him.

It is doubtful if her motive at first was more than to advance her husband's interests by increasing the friendliness which existed between the two families; but as soon as she learned that Mrs. Washington was a bit jealous,—for the Commander often bestowed compliments upon the charming Lucy,—a spirit of mischief led her to many venturesome experiments with her powers of fascination.

Mrs. Washington knew very little of this, and indeed nothing really occurred to which she could object; but in spite of his dignity and responsibilities, General Washington was still a man, and could keenly enjoy, as do other men, the personal attractions of a handsome woman.

"I just want to say one little word," said Lucy Knox, "and then you foolish men may sit up till dawn."

"Would you bid us be sure to cover up the fire, Lucy?" asked General Knox, playfully; "or are we to fasten the oak bar across the front door so as to barricade ourselves against the Indians?"

"Neither one nor t'other," was the ready reply; "nothing so domestic. The logs may blaze away all night, for aught I care; there is surely rain enough pouring down on the roof to put out a fire, and I am not a bit afraid of being tomahawked by the red men. What I want to tell is, that I have been warned in a dream that I was to lead—in fact, was leading—a reel

with General Washington ; and I woke up to hear the rain, and you two men talking, talking, talking ! Do you know what I am going to do ? *Give a ball !*"

"But, my dear," remonstrated Knox, "General Washington is engaged with affairs too grave for dancing. I think it would hardly meet approval at the headquarters in Newburgh."

"A ball ! Bravo !" cried Major Tilghman. "How it would rejoice every one's heart if you would give one here !"

"I fear our hearts are hardly light enough for dancing in this crisis," reiterated General Knox.

"Oh, but our feet are light ; are they not, Major ?" persisted Lucy. "It would be a great success, could we only find enough ladies."

"There were many fair ones about here last autumn," Tilghman replied, with the deliberate manner of one who had gravely considered the matter.

"Oh, fie ! for shame, sir," Mrs. Knox cried ; "what would your poor fair cousin in Baltimore say if she knew you had been casting sheep's eyes on the Newburgh maidens ?"

"Lucy, you forget yourself," again from the grave husband.

"Not I, Henry ; 'tis Major Tilghman who forgets his sweetheart. But 'on with the dance !' Let me see what ladies are available for the many officers who will jump at the chance of coming, despite their grave hearts ! There's Maria Colden, the red-haired girl who has so much manner——"

"Lucy !" reprovingly from Knox.

"I have marked the same pronounced manner in Richard, the uncle," put in Major Tilghman, pacifically.

"To be sure, he is a trifle pompous," continued the undaunted Lucy; "and there is Sallie Jansen, a jolly little minx from New Paltz, or is it Kingston? and her sweet, amiable friend Gitty Wyncoop, and the Belden girls—they are amiable, too, but they come of fighting stock—and the Weigands and the Deyos—good patriots all. Oh, I am sorry not to ask Miss Margaret Ettrick, the fairest of the whole bevy; but it would hardly do, would it, Henry?"

"Certainly not," quite decidedly from Henry.

"Why not, if I may be so bold as to inquire?" this from Tilghman, not quite as disingenuous as it sounded. "I remember Miss Peggy as most charming, and should deplore her absence from your ball, Mrs. Knox."

"Report says that this pearl, this daisy of Ettrick Grove, has been already chosen by Captain Ford, now with his Excellency at the Hasbrouck House; so, even were you free, Major, I fear your chances would be few. Plain John, as he is called, has good muscle and is well trained to fight a rival, were he even as brave as yourself, sir."

"I am ever a laggard in love, ma'am," Tilghman replied, catching his hostess's merry mood; "but pray tell me why one so favored by the honor of Captain Ford's attentions should be excluded from the list of your distinguished guests?"

"It is no secret, is it, Henry?" hesitated Lucy. "No? Well, her father is suspected of being a Tory. Lately there was some money found buried in his garden, and he is on the black-list of the ever-vigilant Committee of Safety, and you know what that means. We will welcome Margaret Ettrick when she becomes Margaret Ford; hardly before. Good-night, gentle-

men. I retire to dream of treading another measure with our Commander-in-Chief,—if his stately wife will permit me the honor.”


## CHAPTER XVII

### “I LEAD ANOTHER LIFE THAN THIS”

THE next day the showers moderated. Before night the sky cleared and there were red sunset clouds to be seen behind Snake Hill, an eminence made famous in the following autumn as overlooking the last encampment of the American army. By dawn of the following morning the sun rose bright and clear over the Fishkill hills, coming up in the notch between the two beacons, flooding river, field, and valley with its welcome cheeriness. The air was as transparent as crystal; a thousand new blades of green grass had pushed their way through the wet earth, and there were ten times as many wild flowers abloom in the woods as there had been the day before, while the greedy robins were so glutted with worms they scarce had time or voice to sing.

Mrs. Knox was as busy and as happy as the birds. She rose early, mounted her horse, and, attended by two servants, went about from house to house giving the invitations to her ball, which was to be in a week's time.

“Just a pretty frisk,” she said, playfully, while every one felt sure the affair would be long remembered in New Windsor and Newburgh. Every one, moreover, who was “any one,” as Maria Colden expressed it to



her bosom friend Sallie Jansen, "will be there. La ! Sallie, dear, are you sure you are quite fit to go?"

"My mother will send me my new frock by a messenger," answered Sallie; "I only hope the saddlebags will not crush my sleeves. I am almost surprised we are asked," she added, determined to pay her dearest friend back in her own coin. "I—I did fear, since I was stopping with you, you might not be on Mrs. Knox's list. I was half inclined to make my visit at Gitty's, since the Wyncoops are such patriots."

"I think my uncle has influence, if he is not a fighting Yankee," Miss Colden answered, quickly.

"Poor little Peggy is cut," Sallie said.

"La, my dear; who, pray, are the Ettricks?"

"It is too bad——"

"Oh ! for pity's sake don't bring wrinkles on your face with such foolish fretting."

"I don't believe Captain Ford will accept, if he knows——"

"He can decline then, for all I care for his plain face !"

"Do you think the Frenchman will be there?" Miss Jansen presently asked, timidly. She was wondering if she should care much about the dance if fate answered this question in the negative.

"I don't know or care," was Maria's nonchalant reply. There was one comfort in associating with Maria Colden, a comfort one may always enjoy in the society of selfish people,—she lacked perception, and one could indulge in any sort of a vagary, from heart-ache to toothache, without being discovered.

When Peggy at Ettrick Grove heard of the coming ball through Chloe, who duly embellished an already

much decorated tale, she mourned the omission of her name on the list of invited guests.

"Oh, I am so sorry not to go," she sighed ; "I just love dancing."

"It's the fellows 'stead o' the fiddlers yo' love, Missy," the slave woman answered, to which remark the young mistress turned a deaf ear, thinking, as we all have thought, that servants should not be encouraged to talk. It is somewhat strange one never arrives at this conclusion till these same servants have said something not conducive to one's *amour propre*.

"I reck'n Cap'n Fo'd 'll be look'n' in vain fo' a pa'tner," Chloe went on unabashed, "when he do'n see yo'. Sho' ! I wish yo' was goin', Missy, in a pretty gown I co'd fix yo' from yo' ma's." Margaret's blush faded. She had not been thinking of the American officer at all. She had not thought of him for more than a week. He had not called since the day she was out, and, although she did not blame him for his part in digging up the treasure, the act had not made her look any more favorably upon his suit. Moreover, an inexperienced woman cannot easily think seriously of two men at once ; such a serving of two masters distracts even a practiced coquette, and Peggy was not a flirt.

It was the ever-compelling law of exclusion which blotted Jonathan Ford from her mind, and the compelling force of her new love for Paschal that made another's image dim.

On the rough, unfinished wall of her attic chamber there hung an old sampler, worked by some one of a generation that antedated her mother's ; a sampler that depicted, in faded flosses and discolored crewels, a sylvan scene of wonderful beauty and suggestiveness. Two

figures, a lady decidedly *décolleté*, and a man in court costume, stood on opposite sides of a brook ; the latter offering a hand fearfully out of perspective to the former, who had apparently been coyly refusing it for the last hundred years. In the background, above the faultlessly regular outline of a group of blue-green trees, there rose a castle of extraordinary architecture, in the matter of flying buttresses, oriel windows, dog-tooth ornamentation and towers, while in the foreground, on the left, to balance the picture in true Ruskin fashion, there appeared on a lavender lake two ships sailing with sails full set, contrary ways, accompanied by swans equal in size to the vessels.

For years, Margaret at waking each morning had gazed from beneath the white curtains of her high, four-posted bed at this piece of mural tapestry, and vainly wished that she might some some day achieve a like wonder on her sampler ; yet never till her meeting with the Frenchman did she guess what would happen should the discreet lady at last permit the daring cavalier to take her hand and help her over the brook. It needs no liberal education to understand the sweet mysteries of life when once passion has been awakened. A moment of such experience tells a girl more than fifty years in a convent. A worldly wise woman, on the other hand, may fritter away her half-century without really living a half hour,—and God pity those to whom nothing happens ; who are dead and do not know it !

When Margaret now looked at the offered crewel hand, never suspecting it to be out of drawing,—since an art education does not necessarily precede an experience in love,—she felt that she knew something of the sweetness in store for the waiting lady. She must



yield at last to the man's entreaties ; she must cross the stream, which became a navigable river an inch farther away on the canvas, and then she would awake into a new life, as Margaret herself had awakened.

In vain might Jonathan Ford woo, when he presented to her imagination no such picturesque background of ancestors ; no great-uncle worthy to wear the title of marquis in far-away France ; no father fleeing a French court and throwing himself and his fortune in with the American people. No, indeed ! Captain Ford was only a man. He was, in fact, " plain John," while Louis Paschal seemed a hero.

The storm which kept her indoors, busied over many household tasks, such as cleaning the brass and-irons, hatchelling the flax for her wheel, darning her father's silk stockings, and mending the torn ruffles of his shirt, did not depress her with its gloom.

" I am content," she said softly to herself ; " he loves me, for he has said so ; and I love him and have told him so. God knows how it will be, but I will never marry a Yankee."

And God did know, but did not at once tell Peggy. He finds it better to keep His own secrets.

Chloe went back to the kitchen, after playing the not unusual rôle of Job's comforter, while her young mistress sat down to her spinning, and began softly to croon a song whose tinkling melody quaintly matched the sound of falling raindrops :

Hark ! Hark ! I hear in the dark  
Only the footsteps of the rain ;  
Close, close, outside the house,  
Steps approaching ; are these for me ?  
Gently, gently, coming fast.  
And, oh, if this can be ?

See, my love, 'tis all in vain  
To keep true lovers parted,  
If they be faithful hearted.  
Hark ! Hark ! I hear in the dark  
Only the footsteps of the rain.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

### **FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW**

ON the next day Margaret made an excuse to mount her pony, Mollie, and scamper in to Newburgh, to learn such particulars of the promised gayeties as might fall like crumbs to her hungry curiosity.

Mollie felt as gay as her rider, and the distance of three or four miles was quickly made, over muddy roads and across swollen brooks. When the Hasbrouck House was approached, Miss Ettrick dismounted, and, carelessly fastening the pony to a tree, ran along a short cut she well knew that led to the river shore and, indirectly, to Colden's Gore, where Mr. Colden's residence was plainly visible on the high bank. It was but the work of a breathless moment to climb this steep bluff and stand on the grass-plot before the big, pretentious house, before regaining courage to knock at the pannelled front door. The mansion was somewhat showily decorated for the times ; painted yellow, with green blinds ; and a high colonnaded piazza made it more conspicuous by the enormous white pillars, which reached to the second story. There was a garden around it, already blooming with crocuses as gay as the house itself ; while the situation on the bluff gave the whole place an air of marked superiority to its more humble neighbors. Below, on the water, the cries of

the sailors on the sloops that lay in the bay came up, and from behind the staring green blinds the country maid heard merry voices talking together, as if Maria might be giving a tea-drinking.

Peggy looked ruefully down at her short cotton skirt, and regretted her carelessness in letting it get mud-stained by her walk across the fields. Her hands, too, were red with the juice of the white blood-root that she had gathered to stick in her belt, and her long braids were in much disorder from her rapid canter. Nevertheless, she determined to go in and chat with Maria, Sallie Jansen, and Gitty Wyncoop ; to gain, if possible, some items concerning the French lessons and—save the mark !—the French teacher.

She paused a moment near the end of the vine-embowered porch which overlooked the river, scarcely knowing why she thus dallied, and heard presently, in familiar tones, these distinctly uttered words, which, coming unmistakably from Sallie Jansen, sounded clearly in the still air :

“ Ah, please, don't ; really, you must not ; some one will see us ; please, don't.” The words were certainly “ please, *don't*,” but the caressing tone said “ please, *do*.”

“ Pardon ; thus do they honor fair ladies in the court in France,” was the ready answer, which Margaret was not long in recognizing to be from Louis Paschal. “ We salute, we embrace, we kiss the hand, Mam'selle.” There was an expressive pause here, and then the Frenchman continued in his own tongue, which it is to be hoped his pupil on the porch understood more readily than the erstwhile pupil in the glen, “ *après tout, cela ne fait mal à personne, et il faut que les hommes et les femmes s'amuse*nt.”

This was worse than a cipher message to Margaret, whose heart-beats nearly deafened her ; but what followed was quite plain. It came in whispered cadences : "Will you honor me, dear lady, by permitting me to give you a token of my great admiration ; a token which you will accept, I am sure, as a pledge of what I am going to ask you to do for my sake?"

"What do you mean, Monsieur?" Miss Jansen asked. It is impossible to give an idea of her pronunciation of the word "*Monsieur*," aired for the first time on an occasion far too serious for the use of so ordinary an address as "Sir." Paschal's confidence and admiration surprised her. She was delighted, of course, but withal a little frightened, and would have given worlds to know what Maria would have advised her to do and say under such new and interesting circumstances. Sallie's nature was emphatically a clinging one ; but we all know that peaches which bear the name of "Clings" have, despite their red, downy cheeks, hard stones within. Sallie liked to ask advice as much as Maria liked to give it ; hence the affinity between the two different natures.

"Will you give me your confidence as I give you mine?" Paschal went on, with never a thought of anything but the work ahead of him. If he regarded the color in Sallie's cheek, whose fire came from blood dangerously near the boiling point, he but rejoiced that one so sensitive as Margaret should be spared the task he was about to lay on this less earnest-minded girl. "I give my heart, my faith, my life in your keeping, *Cherie* ; am I safe in so sweet a prison as in your breast?" he continued.

Miss Sallie was too much awed to giggle ; while nearby, on the grass-plot, somebody else grew icy cold.

There came now to the listener among the crocuses a noise like the crumpling of a starched sleeve ; a tiny sigh ; a swishing whisper of squeaking silk ; a silence that spoke louder than all previous suggestions ; and then Margaret—who had never before played the part of eavesdropper—moved nearer, and saw Sallie close, ah, very close to the Frenchman, holding up a stubby brown finger on which sparkled a brilliant diamond.

“ If any one should see it ? ” murmured the happy possessor, in her heart thinking half the pleasure in the possession was the exhibiting of such a trophy. She held it up to the light and watched the flashing brightness with delight as she added, “ Shall I wear it ? ”

“ Not yet,” was the quiet answer ; “ hide it till the evening of the ball, then wear it on your finger and wait for me.”

“ I thought you were to be my escort,” interrupted Miss Jansen, much of the anticipated pleasure gone at these last words.

“ No, Mam’selle ; that is a part of the condition of which I spoke.” The words were said with an assumed sadness. “ I cannot go with you, and I cannot now explain why not. I regret it, a thousand times I regret it, but—I ask your trust in this ? ”

There was compliance in the silence, and the Frenchman was encouraged to go on. “ Do you love me enough to trust me ? ”

“ Must I ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then I will.”

“ Shall we seal the compact ? Ah, but yes—do not draw away from me. *Ciel !* It is sweet to be loved.”

Not far away somebody gave a bit of a gasping sigh, like a weak little kitten vainly lifting up a helpless re-

monstrance when a big, cruel boy puts it in a bag before throwing it in the river. Kittens are surely never drowned but once, yet they seem to know how dreadfully cold the water will feel.

"Nothing I can say will offend you?" Paschal asked after a pause. His Indian ears were keen, and he had hesitated a second, thinking he had heard a noise.

"Nothing."

"Then keep my confidence; do as I ask, and you will show me that you love me. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

Another expressive pause, and then Sallie asked: "What do you wish me to do?"

"It is a very little thing," said the Frenchman, trying to make sure the girl was sufficiently under his control to be a willing tool.

"Well," responded the now obviously yielding assistant, whose brief monosyllables evidently quite satisfied her questioner. There may have been an accompanying demonstration, but that one word was the only spoken pledge.

"You will be at the ball, and so will General Washington. He will come late and alone, as Mrs. Washington is indisposed——"

"Are you sure?"

"I am not blind," answered Paschal, impatiently; "I have reason to believe she refuses many invitations which he would prefer she should accept. Now, listen; when the General does come; when he is arrived," the Frenchman repeated, slipping unconsciously into his own constructive form of speech,—one of the few traces left of his foreign parentage,—"you will write your own name on the window glass of the back sitting-room——"

"How shall I write on a window-pane?" asked the inexperienced accomplice.

"*Ma foi!* Surely you know a diamond will cut like a knife, and write like a quill pen on glass?"

"No, sir, I did not. I never had a diamond before." Miss Jansen was mortified at the implied reproof, and was quite abashed. She roused up, however, to say: "Is that all I must do?"

"It is enough. It will show me that you love me. I trust you to ask no more questions."

"You will be at the ball?"

"It is possible."

"But if you are not," stifling an unspoken regret, "how will you know if I put my name on the window?"

"Leave that to me. Remember, others will see what you write, but will not know what it means unless you tell them, and you have promised not to betray our secret——"

"That you love me?" asked Sallie, puzzled, but quite satisfied with the answer which followed her innocent question. She was less abashed by this sort of wordless caressing than Margaret, and the Frenchman felt assured he had found a helper in the kidnapping plot whose coolness would equal his own.

"I am sure you trust me, dearest, as I trust you," now reached the ears of the one who literally and figuratively stood outside. After this Peggy sank upon the ground, the strength suddenly gone out of her, the hope out of her heart, the joy of living out of her soul. Indeed, long before these final arrangements between Miss Jansen and Paschal had been completed, her mind had refused to follow the conversation understandingly, and she had stood in a mental fright. Now she had

only physical sensations. Her knees shook, her chin trembled, her hands were icy, and there was a painful pounding in her chest. She looked backward, as a drowning man looks before sinking in the deep waters which are closing over him. She remembered the meeting in the glen, when she knew the sweetness of a first kiss ; she remembered, alas, when she would have given all she was worth to be able to forget.

People who have enjoyed the dangerous delights of opiates know well the pleasant sensations of fulness and lightness in all parts of the body, followed later by a corresponding sense of aching weight. The mental prostration which had overtaken Margaret was changing to pain and weariness. In her inexperience she had at first thought she was dying, but now realized herself to be agonizingly alive. Alive, with nothing in life to enjoy. Her body living, her soul dead. There seemed nothing to think about, nothing left to dream over, scarcely anything left to wish for ; since, when one's ideal is demolished, it is hard at first for the imagination to recreate another. What she had believed as true as God on His throne in heaven, only nearer and dearer, had never existed at all. The kiss laid on her lips had been a make-believe ; the words spoken empty and tuneless. With the sight of the diamond flashing on Sallie's finger, her own keen hopes had died. She did not care for the diamond itself as Sallie cared, but for the gift which went with it, the gift of love which none could see. It was hers no longer, and, what was worse, had never been hers at all.



## CHAPTER XIX


## THE CAPTAIN MAKES AN EXPLANATION

MARGARET was roused from her stupor by hearing, "Come in, my dear, come in," from a voice at her elbow. She turned to see Mr. Richard Colden himself, and blushed to find that this cheery old gentleman, in his three-cornered hat, knee breeches, silver buckles, and gayly embroidered waistcoat, had been watching her for several minutes. He had just returned from Hasbrouck's mill, and was now leaning against one of the huge white pillars of his house, looking afar over the bluff, and again nearer at hand at his pretty, blossoming garden. He was happy, and consequently rather unobservant of others' misery.

The discovery of Miss Ettrick seated on his grass-plot was surprising ; but, like other practical and successful people, he wasted no time in idle speculation or profitless seeking for hidden causes.

"I was looking at your lovely crocuses, sir," the girl said, with what composure she could muster, as she arose and came towards the kindly old gentleman. There was something queer and shaky about her limbs, as if she had had a long fever, and the slim, cold hand she gave her host trembled in his friendly grasp.

"Well, they are fine ; and my tulip bed will make a grand showing. I hope to be able to get some better bulbs from over the water by next year, if things go well. D'ye know that General Washington has imported seeds, and the soldiers are distributing them everywhere about here on their rides? Ha ! ha ! ha !



This new world will blossom like old England by and by, d'ye mind that, little girl? Tell your good father that whichever George rules us—and I know one or the other will hold the reins pretty tight, for it is all folly to talk of a self-governing people, my dear—we will have posies in our garden whoever sits on the throne!"

"Yes, sir," answered Peggy, without much idea of what was being said as she followed Mr. Colden into the front parlor.

The parlor, a large, bare-looking apartment, entirely lacking in the small prettinesses of our own day, was handsomely furnished with twelve mahogany chairs, all alike, and one claw-footed mahogany table, with its folding leaf opened against the wall, displaying on its polished surface a formidable array of tea equipage.

Maria greeted the New Windsor guest graciously, and poured her out a scalding cup of tea, which she sipped cautiously. A half-hour passed quickly, during which Margaret sustained herself with such composure as she could command.

It was getting late when she made her farewells to the girls, explaining that she had left her pony some distance away, and did not need the assistance of the Colden's coachman, black Pompey, to mount.

"Oh, Peggy, stop and take another dish of tea with us," urged the hostess; "you come so seldom; why hurry away?"


"We have not spoken a word about the ball," said Gitty Wyncoop, a stranger in Newburgh, who did not understand why the subject of Mrs. Knox's coming dance had been tacitly avoided by both Miss Colden and Miss Jansen. "I have sent home," the young lady continued, artlessly pleased to secure a new listener, "for my changeable; but I had an express yes-

terday from my father, and he says he will send it by a neighbor who comes hither on horseback. I pray heaven the gown may arrive in time."

"I am not invited to the party," Peggy replied, with what dignity she could muster, hurrying out of the room as she spoke, without waiting to hear Sallie say: "La, how sorry I am for her," glancing at the others roguishly, as she spoke, with an expression that belied her pitying words.

Once outside the house, Margaret ran up the hill and on into the woods, to find, to her dismay, that Mollie, tired of waiting, had slipped her bridle and trotted homeward for her supper. Frightened at the thought of her father's displeasure, unnerved by the excitement through which she had passed, her distressed mistress now threw herself despairingly on the ground, wondering helplessly who would really mourn her if she were to die here in the woods by the hand of some tomahawking Indian. Would any one weep for her? She thought of her mother, dead and gone since her childhood; but heaven—that place she sang of in church, that blessed home for meeting once more the loved ones—seemed now afar off. Her relations to her father, although he had her respect and obedience, were formal, as was the custom of the day. She knew he would scold her, as she deserved, if she reached home alive after such an adventure; but should she die, she had no thought that he would cry over her as a mother would. She tried to pray.

"Our Father, who art in heaven——" oh, why in heaven, when we need Him so sorely on earth? She heard the sound of horse's hoofs coming over the rough new country road. She was sure that her death-warrant was sealed; she was about to die, now, alone in



the woods, on this fair May evening, within a few miles of home. Die and be forgotten. From these morbid imaginations, she was suddenly aroused and surprised by hearing the horseman say :

"Miss Ettrick ; my dear Miss Ettrick, pray let me help you on my horse, and take you home. I met your pony a mile away, galloping towards New Windsor, and I feared some mischance had befallen you. Were you thrown? Why, here is a blood-stain on your dress ; tell me, are you hurt?"

"Oh, thank you, Captain Ford ; I am not hurt at all. I was frightened to find my horse gone, and still more scared when I heard some one coming. I—I—I——" The girl had pluckily pulled herself together, and stood facing her rescuer with what calmness she could summon for the emergency.

"Afraid of me?" the man said, in a hurt and surprised tone that would have gone to the heart of a woman less distraught than the one to whom he now spoke. She made no answer, scarcely raised her eyes, when, pointing to the red marks on her hands and dress, he again said : "I fear you are hurt."

"No, no ; I gathered some blood-root, and it stains."

"I was afraid it was something serious ; but may I put you on my horse? He is safe and I will lead him. I see you are too tired to walk."

"Yes," she whispered ; she had no strength for other words of acceptance.

He lifted her up on his saddle and arranged her dress with much delicacy, yet in a manner almost business-like, venturing even to scold her a little for her imprudence at being out alone so late ; then, going to the horse's head, led him slowly along the homeward road.

It was late when they crossed Murderer's Creek, but, even in the gathering shadows, Captain Ford took no liberties in bidding Margaret farewell. The silent journey had been fraught with the tenderest thoughts for his loved charge, yet he doubted if his companion felt any answering emotion.

"Good-by," he said, as he lifted her down and noticed with anxious concern that the lightness had gone out of her body, as it had from her spirits. "Miss Margaret," he added, "this is no time or place, after your great fright and fatigue, to speak of what lies next my heart——"

"No, no," she muttered, "don't, don't——"

"Pardon me, but I think you misunderstand——"

"No, no." She was tired of men, and of love, and of lovers, and her conscience told her, by the light of her new suffering, that she must not let this man deceive himself as she herself had been deceived. She did not love him ; he must not love her.

"I cannot explain about the robbery in your father's garden without disloyalty to my duty ; but I may say that, in spite of it, in spite of your dislike to me, I honor and respect you before every other woman in the world. My honor and respect cannot harm you."

Captain Ford paused, and presently received this somewhat insufficient answer :

"I thank you, sir."

## CHAPTER XX

### A FISH STORY

WHEN Captain Ford remounted, he turned the head of his horse to the south and rode on without any very definite idea of his destination. All the glories of the Hudson, as it enters the Highlands, were before him, but his mind was not sensitive to scenic impressions. The vivacious life of May was in every leaf and weed that gathered along the path to see him pass, but he let them nod and bow in vain, without returning their salutations. No sympathetic chord responded, as he passed, to the liquid music in the exquisite notes of joy that floated out and away from the throat of a bird hidden deep in the cool and odorous mountain woods.

He was in love.

Astarte, Isis, or Venus never had a more ardent devotee than was this solitary worshipper. Why must he burn incense in secret? What act or offering was necessary to propitiate?

Acting upon an impulse which he never attempted to explain, the name "Margaret!" leaped from his lips like a cry. It was an expression of pain from a wounded heart; the declaration, also, of a purpose, the determination to possess her. His horse stopped at the word, as if he understood his master, and knew the true destination was not to the south. Unguided and unhindered, the animal turned confidently about and galloped back through the gathering darkness. No welcome at Mr. Ettrick's house, however, made him pause in passing, and soon he approached Murderer's Creek on his return

to Newburgh. The bridge was near the present dam, which marks the former site of the lower rapids, the limit of navigation for any craft larger than an Indian's canoe.

The captain stopped his horse midway of the bridge, his attention being arrested by a small point of light some distance up the creek, which he had never noticed before, and, being utterly indifferent to the weird stories concerning the glen, he felt half inclined to dismount and, fastening his horse to some convenient tree, make a personal investigation of the source of the mysterious light. He looked at it long and earnestly, and twice it seemed to disappear, as if some person had stepped in the line of sight. His curiosity was still further excited by the trail of its reflection on the water, being soon afterwards crossed by some moving object which he could not clearly discern.

These clues were too slight, however, and the night too dark, to give confirmation to his suspicions, and, obtaining no further indication of anything unusual, he told his horse that they must hurry home. In a moment he was galloping up the steep bank of Forge Hill, then on beyond to the headquarters.

Had Captain Ford carried out his half-formed wish, he would have followed closely upon the footsteps of Mr. Ettrick, who was even then on his way to meet an appointment at the Still.

There was no road or recognized path along the stream above the bridge, but experience had made Mr. Ettrick familiar with this route, which was difficult to follow even in daylight, because of its entanglements of undergrowth and obstructing rocks. His present task was to pilot two friends to the rendezvous, there to meet with the chief of the Indians, who had been per-

mitted to come up from Manhattan Island, and whose canoe had been noted by Captain Ford as it crossed the line of reflection on the water. The utmost precaution was ordinarily taken at the cabin in the glen to prevent any telltale light from being seen, but an exception was made this night, to assist the visitors in their approach.

The cabin was a rude shelter of poles and slabs, whose rear elevation was the high bank itself, into which a back apartment had been excavated. The structure might easily satisfy any casual visitor of the truthfulness of its claim that it was a fisherman's lodge ; in proof of which assertion a goodly assortment of fishing-tackle was conspicuously displayed upon the walls and floor of the main room. A door at the back apparently opened into a small rear closet or store-room, partly filled with rubbish. To the presiding magician, known as the head fisherman,—who evoked fiery spirits from the corn which was occasionally taken there surreptitiously,—the closet had a well-concealed side door, which opened into the excavated room under the bank. Here was located a furnace, dimly outlined in the darkness, and surmounted by a coil of pipe that looked like a huge corkscrew which was being used by an invisible hand to open a prodigious black bottle of an *Inferno* beneath.

A grotesque silhouette of the waiting fisherman, who was in charge of the cabin on the night described, was projected upon the wall by the candle at the window. The wind that blew in at a broken pane upon the flaring flame gave to the fluctuating distortion an artistic originality, and at the same time melted the candle upon one side, until a dripping, white stalactite of tallow hung from the window-sill, while underneath a corre-



sponding stalagmite was being slowly built up from the floor.

The "fisherman" evidently was not listening to the rapids of Murderer's Creek nearby, as he sat quietly waiting, chewing a bit of wood, nor to the noisy, dashing water of Silver Stream, which joins it with its stories of hairbreadth escapes from the haunted places of the glen from which it has fled. Suddenly, the heavy shutter was banged to with a slam that threw the candle upon the floor and extinguished it. "By gosh!" he cried, as in total darkness he rose to open the door.

"We didn't need your light any longer," said Ettrick as he entered, "and so I closed your shutter; but what has become of the glim?"

"That blind came shut as if a hurricane had struck it," was the jocose reply: "I will have another light in a minute. Are you all here?"

"All right," was Ettrick's method of reassuring the host, adding to his companions, "step inside, gentlemen, so that I can shut the door." This suggestion being acted upon, a stroke upon a flint soon restored to the candle its spark of life, and shadowed the walls with five curious moving figures in black.

"Gentlemen, be seated," said the hospitable fisherman, and to the smallest of the four visitors he added: "If you are tired, you can lie down on my sofy," pointing to a rude couch opposite the window.

"He is small but nervy," said Ettrick, "and is in no need of sleep at present, I reckon." The young man apparently did not hear either the suggestion or reply, but took his seat, quietly, upon one end of the "sofy," and waited for Ettrick's next remark, which was somewhat suggestive:

"We can't fish without bait."

"I beg your pardon," said the host, who produced a bottle and mugs from a box nailed against the wall and proceeded to serve the guests. Notwithstanding Washington's expressed opinion that in order to exert influence one should not speak frequently, Mr. Ettrick was again the first to break the silence. Raising his cup and nodding towards the young man, he gave the toast: "Here is to the health and success of our leader, *Major* Paschal. God bless him!"

The atmosphere of the cabin instantly seemed wondrously warmed and cheered, but whether from the potatoes or the sentiment, no one stopped to consider, for all eyes were turned upon the one who had been thus announced and who now rose to his feet, pale but confident and evidently gratified.

"It is now one month that I have been in Newburgh," the Frenchman said, slowly and distinctly; "and while we have had to wait for our opportunity, so far all has gone well. That which we have discussed separately should now be talked over together, so as to be perfectly understood. Providence certainly favors us, for not only does General Washington regard me without suspicion, but in a few days he will attend a ball to be given by Mrs. Knox just above here at the head of the glen." He looked about, slowly, into the eyes of his companions, as if searching for any token of misgivings of the result.

As it is generally safer to follow one's hopes rather than fears, and as the five conspirators were fully committed to the enterprise and confident of success, the speaker was satisfied with the examination and resumed:

"I have examined this glen thoroughly, and if I can beguile Washington from the house down to the mill

on the night of the ball, as I know I can, and if the Indians under your guidance," bowing to Ettrick, "when I say the word, will secure him and prevent an outcry, he can be easily tied and led or carried down here through the ravine before we can be followed."

A murmur of approval from all present was the only response.

"If we are discovered, and worst comes to worst, we can bring him here and——"

The fisherman pointed towards the back door, which gesture seemed to be perfectly understood, and Paschal added : "We could then take to our canoes and escape down the river ; but this must never be. *Never !*"

Mr. Colden, who had not yet spoken, expressed himself as fully confident of complete success, as did also Mr. Ettrick. As for the Indian, when the Frenchman had translated the conversation, that distant kinsman instantly held out his mug to the fisherman and was rewarded with a libation so copious that no doubt was afterwards felt of the entire compliance of the red man.

"The plan, then, is this," said Paschal. "On the night of the ball, as soon as it is dark, the Indians are to bring the canoes up the creek to this point. Six of them, under Mr. Ettrick, are to go on up to the mill near the head of the glen and wait. The other six are to remain here by the canoes. Mr. Jansen will bring me word when the name of his daughter is scratched on the window to indicate that General Washington has arrived, and he will then be ready to prevent our being followed by saying, if necessary, that we have gone to Newburgh. My part will be to bring the General down to the mill, and when we get there, and I say the words, '*Do you want to go to New York ?*'—re-

member, now, not until you hear those words,—then make quick work of it, and before morning we will be down the river and past the lines with our cargo of——”

“Fish,” suggested Ettrick, and they all repeated the word approvingly and laughed without reserve.

“Where will you be when I want to find you?” asked Mr. Jansen.

“A quarter of a mile down the road towards Ettrick’s place,” answered the spy; “for I must not be seen near the house until I go there to speak to General Washington alone.”

The clock-work ingenuity of the plan and its apparent adequacy invested each person present with high confidence and courage, so much so that Mr. Ettrick expressed regret that any delay was necessary.

“You don’t know the Indians,” responded the leader. “They are necessary to our plan, but could not be induced to help in such an undertaking without first engaging in one of their religious dances. They hold one tomorrow at the Danskamer.”

“That is odd,” observed Colden.

“I know it,” responded Paschal, “but it is true, and we cannot go ahead without them. I intend to go there to see that nothing goes astray. All is well so far;” and they drank to the sentiment of “all is well.” Soon afterwards the low-burning candle was extinguished and the conspirators filed out under the trees to retrace their steps.

Inside the cabin the reputed “fisherman” stretched himself upon the couch, wearied by thoughts of the coming enterprise; but sleep brought him troublous dreams. One phantasm followed another with noiseless steps, until suddenly the closet-door was flung

open, and the frightful appearance of the rusty, coiled pipe of the still, like the ribs of a gigantic, headless, armless skeleton, emerged from the blackness of the back room directly towards him, threatening to encompass and crush him in its encircling folds. Attempting to flee in terror, his feet seemed weighted with lead, so that he could only drag himself to the door, where, finding his efforts to escape unavailing, he roared aloud with a startling and terrifying plaint that echoed down the glen and awakened the lone occupant of the cabin, trembling with fright and wet with a cold perspiration.

Truly dreams are of such stuff as we ourselves are made, and no necromancer could have brought the distiller's nightmare to Peggy's pillow, nor the girl's sweet memories into the hut where the fisherman slept. Will God pardon the wrong doing or the wrong thinking of a dream? Will He reward the virtue which exists in the sleeper's imagination?

In the night, a passing dream,  
That would be wrong could it be seen  
Alive and real in pure daylight,  
May rest unhurt on eyes shut tight  
In the night.

'Twere vain Aladdin's lamp to clean ;  
Its light is dim and far less bright  
Than thoughts which come, unsought, I ween,  
In the night.

Who wakes from sleep, and yet would lean  
Back on his couch again to dream,

Belies his heart, belies his sight ;  
For, God be praised, awake we fight  
Against the wrong which right did seem  
In the night.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE INDIAN DANCE AT THE DANSKAMER

It was daybreak, the morning following Margaret Ettrick's late homeward ride, and now while she still slept under the white curtains of her high four-posted bedstead, her escort, Captain Ford, ever alert and vigilant in his surveillance, stood near the river bank by Tilghman's side, both witnesses of the singular actions of an excited company of Indians.

The meeting place was that low projection of land, four or five miles above Newburgh, that juts out into the Hudson, and has been known since Henry Hudson's time as the Teufel's Danskamer. Here Hudson saw the red men dancing, and mistaking them for devils, so unfittingly christened a place of unsurpassed natural loveliness. Its rocky banks are guarded by fir-tree sentinels ; its slopes being picketed with smaller soldier-like cedars.

And now, this rare May morning, a strange sight met the curious gaze of a group of officers, who were attending the revival of the old-time sacred Indian rites. The grass over which the hideously painted savages were dancing was green and sweet. There were many spring flowers shyly blooming here and there ; the bloodroot, the columbine, the dog-toothed violet, and the anemone. The trees—the birches, the oaks, the maples, the chestnuts, and the lindens—were in full leaf,

while the stately evergreen North River cedars, proud to have worn full dress all through winter's ice and snow, now bowed their compliments to the pretty, newly donned toilets of their deciduous companions. Nature not only smiled, she laughed; only the grotesquely adorned creatures marred the perfection of this stage-like scene, whose upper gallery was the tree-tops, and whose orchestra was the singing birds.

The dance was said to be a species of devil worship, although this may be questioned when one learns that the Indians, before the arrival of the Europeans with whiskey and tobacco, knew no other spirit than the one they called "Good." However this may be, the rites were of a demoralizing nature, and the granting of their revival upon this occasion was considered by many as a most dangerous expedient on the part of General Washington, who desired, if possible, to bind the treacherous red men to the patriot cause by permitting this unusual indulgence. He considered their request a sign that their alliance with the British was broken; and his readiness to comply was a token of the re-establishment of friendly relations with the American people. To prevent excesses, the dance was limited to a single day and night. The presence of the officers was also intended as a precautionary measure.

About a dozen Indians had come up from the little village between the Harlem and Hudson rivers, passing the lines by special permit; while the rest of the company had gathered from the surrounding country.

The whole North River, as the Hudson is frequently called, abounded in Indians. There were the Haverstoos, or the people of the mountains, the Waoranecks, the people of the country, the Warranawonkongs and the Minsis or Minnisinks, not to mention lesser sub-

tribes, all of whom gloried in distinctive dress and customs, but looked alike horrid to the eyes of the American officers now present.

In a cleared space in the middle of the scene, about twenty-five of the older bucks were gathered in a circle, while the remainder were walking about in the rear, or forming an outer ring. The men standing in the centre were about two feet apart, their elbows nearly touching, as they slowly, in spiral curves, moved around a fire that blazed dimly, yet defiantly, in the bright May sunlight.

The creatures were strikingly painted,—after the manner of the Impressionist school,—some wearing masks, some skins of wild beasts representing bears and buffaloes, whose roars they crudely imitated; many were almost entirely naked, decorated on arms and legs with signs and symbols done in yellow ochre and red dyes, while all swayed their lithe bodies from side to side, in time to the music of the tom-toms,—if such an accompaniment could be called music.


One big fellow, for some indescribable reason more repulsive than the others, stood nearest the fire, into which he appeared to be continually about to throw himself. He waved his arms more violently than the rest, and swung himself forward and backward like a person falling into a fit. His sinewy throat became convulsed; the unswallowed saliva ran from his open mouth, which wore an idiotic expression; his eyeballs became fixed, and yet the swaying motions never ceased. Presently he began indistinctly to articulate in a guttural monotone; then suddenly shouted words, in the Indian language, none the less terrifying to the spectators because quite unintelligible. While in this



state, he was possessed of uncommon strength, and it would have been apparent to any latter-day physician that the excitement brought on an epileptic fit. At last, with a hideous yell,—such a cry as once heard is never forgotten,—the creature fell headlong into the fire, from whence the odor of his wet clothing and sizzling dirty skin reached the offended nostrils of all present. His misfortune, it seemed, was considered highly commendable; for after he had been pulled out of the flames with scant ceremony, other dancers had like seizures and received like treatment. The confusion of mind which always follows attacks of an epileptic nature added greatly to the weirdness of this scene, for the victims, after their apparent recovery, returned staggering to their former places in the ring, to behave in a manner as shocking as it was unusual. The sight of a civilized person in a fit is sufficiently terrible. The Scripture words, “possessed of a devil,” seem not inapt; although, as a matter of fact, faints, fits, spasms, and convulsions are probably as heaven-sent as any other form of illness. The appearance of a savage, however, in a like plight, brings to the front a realization of one’s most dreadful imaginings.

“Surely the creatures are insane,” whispered Major Tilghman to young Stuyvesant, who stood by him and whose fair head he had noticed was beginning to move uncontrollably in time to the tuneless tom-toms. “You must get out of this, Peter, or you will yourself be raving and tumbling into the fire.”

“No, no,” muttered the boy, fascinated by the horror, although as nervous as a girl; “I thank you, sir,” he added, courteously, realizing that he was addressing his superior officer. “I long to stay. I cannot go away. It cannot last long.”



"That I question," said some one close at hand ;  
"see the recruits coming up the bank."

"Where is Paschal?" asked Tilghman.

"The Frenchman is among the dancers," Ford explained, tersely.

"Well, it is a rare sight, and one not to be seen again, I reckon, for another hundred years, when we may hardly hope to be present," Major Tilghman said, after a pause.

"I shall not regret my own absence at that date," Ford replied.

"Nor will this lad," the elder officer added, as, with the captain's aid, they led the now fainting young fellow away from the ring of spectators.

"Look, look below!" cried Ford, his taciturnity melting away at the loveliness of the sight. A fleet of tiny Indian canoes danced on the river before them, each one cunningly formed of a single birch-tree's unbroken bark, sewed together with tamarack roots, and so completely waterproof and of such fairy lightness as to have the appearance of a live creature. At night, one might fancy such tiny craft to be the bearers of dreams or other impalpable cargo ; but in bright daylight one noticed rather the wonderful skill of the Indians, who used their paddles with such dexterity that the vessels tip-tilted and swayed with never a possibility of shipwreck.

"I wonder General Washington has permitted this awful dance, do you not?" Ford continued when his mind again returned to the horrid scenes left behind them.

"I would not question his wisdom," Major Tilghman answered ; "and yet I remember to have heard that Washington's grandfather helped chase the whoop-

ing savages away from his home, and that one of his neighbors on a not-distant farm was found lying dead across the threshold of his own door."

"Awful creatures!" Stuyvesant said, as he tried to sit up. "I used to be afraid to go to bed when I was a lad, after my father told me some of his blood-curdling stories; yet we always wanted to hear them twice over, and really enjoyed having the gooseflesh stand out on our backs from fright; wasn't it odd?"

"No queerer than for this crowd to be here watching this horror," Ford answered, the look of sternness which he had earlier worn again clouding his good-natured face.

"Captain John Maynard's ship sailed up our way," Tilghman said, "and old people used to tell of the smell of the bloody scalps hanging on the bowsprit."

"Was your home down on the James River?"

"No, farther north; yet the terrifying tale of Black-Beard is true as gospel."

"Is not this friend of yours—Paschal—part Indian?" Stuyvesant now unwittingly asked Ford.

"He is half Indian," answered Ford, "but no 'friend' of mine."

## CHAPTER XXII

### AN EVIL OMEN

As Captain Ford answered thus brusquely, a particularly horrible noise reached the ears of the little group on the bank, which they found, on returning to the dance circle, to be the preparatory cry always given

before the appearance of the devil, who was supposed to lie hidden in the fire.

"If the omen be favorable," explained Major Tilghman, "a harmless bird or rabbit runs across the plateau; if unfavorable, he takes the shape of a wild beast, snake, or wolf."

"Let us draw closer," said Stuyvesant, all his former nervousness lost in this new excitement.

"See how they jerk their faces," another said; "they look like devils themselves."

"Stop a bit," remonstrated Ford; "that devil of a Frenchman is speaking. Hark! He will sing. I could answer for his deserts, if only God or Satan would send them to him."

"Hush! don't curse; listen," came warningly from the pacific major.

"A lovely Delilah should be his omen," Stuyvesant said, pertly, "to charm him out of his cool senses and then knock all the conceit out of his head! They say he is a deal too daring with the ladies, and—worse luck—the ladies seem to like it, and are all pulling caps for him."

"Sh—shut up!" from Ford, hitting the lad a smart blow on his fair, curly head, all his blood hot in remembrance of Peggy. "Stop gabbling, and look."

The sight was worth a second glance, for the graceful, adaptable Paschal, with much cunning, had so arranged his dress as to combine all the startling savage effects with much that was really beautiful in the costume of a French courtier. Always popular, when it appeared worth while, with the tact of a woman, he had so won the hearts of these half-civilized brethren that he stirred something like admiration in their stolid breasts when he thus appeared before them. He stood

in their midst now, compelling a cessation of all dreadful noises, himself a weird figure, slowly chanting, in the Indian tongue, the following words of a well-known war song :

O poor me !  
Who am going to fight the enemy,  
And know not whether I shall return again  
To enjoy the embraces of my children  
And my wife.  
O poor creature !  
Whose life is not in his own hands,  
Who has no power over his own body,  
But tries to do his duty  
For the welfare of the nation.  
O thou Great Spirit above !  
Grant that I may be successful in this attempt,  
That I may slay the enemy,  
And bring home trophies of war  
To my dear friends,  
That we may rejoice together.  
O take pity on me !  
Give me strength and courage to meet my enemy.  
Take pity on me and preserve my life,  
And I will make thee a sacrifice.

The chant, whose plaint was not unlike the more tutored, but not less bargaining spirit of many of our modern prayers to the Almighty, was followed by the war cry of "Woach ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Woach !"

A screech, so wild that it reached out over the river and penetrated back into the depths of the forest, greeted the omen which presently appeared from out the fire. It was a snake.

All dramatic effect was now forgotten by the principal actor, for no sooner did he see the horrid, slimy reptile in its newly-polished spring sleekness undulating towards him, than he sprang aside with a yell

which would have shamed all his ancestors in its vigor. The Indians, also, drew back, since no worse omen could come from the flames, and the creature attempting to wind itself about the Frenchman's bare leg, was certainly a snake. The nearly naked dancers fled in terror, making no effort whatever to avert the catastrophe by killing the reptile, whose bright eyes gleamed like diamonds, and vied in their splendor with the light of the flames. Doubtless God made him, and, what was more to the point, made him well. He was handsome and probably quite harmless, but had he possessed a hundred rattles, greater consternation could not have shown itself throughout the whole company ; and it was not till Captain Ford stepped into the broken circle and boldly stamped upon its head that anything like the former stoicism was restored.

No applause followed the brave action,—the officers dared not make any demonstration before the Indians, and the latter, ever proud of their immobility, were stoically silent, while Paschal merely looked down at his small foot with returning confidence. The foot was a dainty, well-shaped one, compared with that of his deliverer ; the contrast of a naked foot is always remarkable when seen by the side of a huge military boot. Ford said nothing, and shortly the "kintekaying," as the rites were called, was resumed as if nothing had happened, and no one but fair-haired Stuyvesant remembered to ask him if he were hurt.

"No," was the answer ; "I only wish I had killed them both."

"Were there two?" The Dutchman could not understand riddles.

"There is but one alive now," was Ford's enigmatical reply.

"It is an ill-omened spot for me, too," Stuyvesant answered; "for just here occurred the tragedy of our ancestress, Katrina Van Vrooman, who was coming from Albany, and was tomahawked by the Indians. My grandmother sings the verses that tell of it; I only remember one:

For none that visit the Indian den  
Return again to the haunts of men;  
The knife is their doom, O sad is their lot!  
Beware! beware, the bloodstained spot!

"I never heard the story; it is decidedly interesting." Jonathan Ford spoke kindly, for he liked the lad.

The two stepped away and sat down together on the bank of the river, where they were hidden by some maples, and while the noise of the dance went on they noticed that Paschal had quietly withdrawn from the company. Later they watched him steal softly through the bushes to the shore, where he held a conference with some Indians who had remained in their canoes during the entire morning. He made gestures; they bowed their heads. He waved his hands; they waved in reply.

"Wounded Knee," Paschal said, in tones which were not loud enough to be heard by any but the ears for which they were intended; "lay your face sideways on the ground and hearken to what I shall say. *Mon Dieu!* but it is a bad beginning with the snake, yet we must go on."

The Indian obeyed in stolid silence.

"Washington" was the only word which came with distinctness to Ford, for what followed was spoken in the Indian tongue.

"The great white Father of the American army?"

"It is he."

"Good white man," responded the chief; "I love him much. He have good place by and by. Bad Indian puts him in bad place now." Wounded Knee took his long pipe out of his mouth as he spoke and stared meaningly at Paschal.

"Good white man will kill poor Indian later," said the Frenchman. "Good white man does not love good Indian. I read the books the white man reads. I wear the white man's clothes. I speak the white man's words. I eat at his table. I drink his fire-water. I know his thoughts. They are bad thoughts."

Wounded Knee resumed his pipe, and watched the blue smoke curl upward from the bowl into the clear sky, but did not speak.

"Have you taken this long journey for nothing?" the Frenchman asked, impatiently. "You came to help me, did you not?"

"The omen was bad. It was the evil spirit. I know him well. You know him well. He comes from the fire. The white man smote him, not the red man. I go home tonight."

"No, no," pleaded Paschal, with utmost earnestness. "After three suns are again on the water, you may go. The snake ran from the Waoranecks towards the American officer, which means that the evil one will not hurt our tribe. Our braves will escape his fangs, but the Americans, who stamp on him as they would stamp on us, will be punished. The omen bodes them ill, not us." To clinch this unique argument, Paschal took from an inner pocket a bottle and handed it to the savage.

The dance lasted till darkness fell, and far into the



soft spring night. The fire blazed high, the flames reddening gayly against the green of the forest. The flying sparks scorched the delicate flowers. New and repulsive ceremonies had been instituted since the sun set, to which night lent a needed cover. Many spectators, having supped full of horrors, returned to Newburgh; only Ford and a few who had been detailed to do duty as witnesses remaining till the end.

It was a little past midnight, when a new impetus was given to the orgies by the arrival of fresh recruits from up the river, who rushed into the circle and began pounding upon something made of raw-hide. Circling about this effigy, they emitted the most ear-piercing yells, then rushing back into the darkness, appeared to gather new zeal to return for another onslaught. This was repeated over and over again till day dawned across the river on the low lands which lie north of the Fishkill hills.

"What was the meaning of that ceremony?" asked one of the few bystanders left.

"I wish the effigy had been King George," laughed another officer, "and that I had a hand in the mauling."

"It surely could not be meant for——" the third speaker stopped himself in time to hear Ford say, with a certainty that carried instant conviction: "This is their devil dance. The medicine men teach that their great chief departs at the setting of the sun, and in this way, at his going, they entreat and serve him."

"An odd way," was somebody's comment.

"Where's the Frenchman?" was now asked by Stuyvesant; "he ought to be able to explain matters."

"Gone to the devil, I hope," replied Ford, at which the others laughed. Louis Paschal had gone home.

The fire was kicked out, the Indians stole away in their canoes, the officers mounted their horses and rode back to Newburgh.

All was over.

When Ford reached the Hasbrouck House, he inquired of the sentinel at the door if General Washington was up, to which question he received an answer in the negative.

Before turning in at his quarters for a short sleep, the captain called his servant, and directed him to brush and make ready his best uniform. "It must be in good order, to be worn at Mrs. Knox's ball," he said.

The speaker's plain, brown face looked extremely homely. He was tired, and heavy lines of fatigue had written themselves across his forehead. His mouth twitched and his big awkward hands trembled. At this unfortunate moment he caught a glimpse of himself in the small oval glass hanging above his chest of drawers; he glanced a second time to make sure, and then actually sighed like a disappointed girl. He was far from vain, yet a swift overwhelming remembrance of Paschal's graceful face and figure forced upon him conclusions impossible to evade.

"They say God looks on the heart," he murmured. "It may be; my mother said so often; but girls look only on a man's face, and worse luck to his chances if he be a homely fellow like me!"

## CHAPTER XXIII


## WASHINGTON SENDS A LETTER TO MARGARET

THREE days later—the “three suns” of which the spy spoke to Wounded Knee, and the last which he expected to see at Newburgh, for the plot was now fully ripe—the Frenchman was riding over the road to New Windsor. Although his destination was the Knox Headquarters house, and he had been favored with an invitation to the ball, whither many guests would soon be hurrying, he was not dressed as if he expected to participate in the festivities, but wore, instead, a plain serviceable riding suit of homespun, with his trousers’ legs concealed, to the knees, in the long military boots then so much affected by staff officers.

It would be enough for him to say, in accounting for his early arrival, that he had a letter from the Commander-in-Chief; and should he be pressed to remain, he could explain that he had another message from the General to deliver elsewhere; hence he probably could not return to the dance until late.

Fortune had greatly favored him in planning the minutiae of this the all-important, culminating day and evening of his plan; and while these details seemed to lack no needed feature, now that the long anticipated moment had nearly arrived, he could only restrain his sense of elation by cautioning himself against betraying his confidence through the natural excitement of his temperament.

It seems that the Ellison House, which he was nearing at a smart trot, had been the rendezvous of Tories



in the early part of the war, and there the most trusted loyalists had often met to devise ways and means for assisting the King's troops. To conceal the telltale papers in their possession, a small vault was excavated under the room where they met, as a safe receptacle for these evidences of their adherence to the Crown. It was fortunate for them that this precaution was taken, else suspicion would have been aroused when Continental officers were billeted upon the host. Had the Committee of Safety suspected the existence of the opening underneath the floor, there would have been scant ceremony in sending the owner, on the evidence of the papers it contained, to the bourne from which an immediate return would have been contrary to all precedents. At the conclusion of the last meeting of the loyalists,—Jansen, Ettrick, Colden, and several others,—they secreted a map of the Hudson, showing all the fortifications and location of the troops. Fortunately for the American cause, owing to the seizure of the house, this plan never reached the British Commander at New York.

As the time drew near for the attempted kidnapping, and it became desirable for Paschal to give Washington some additional evidence of his pretended fidelity, the conspirators told the Frenchman the secret of the vault and its contents. With this information, therefore, on the day of the ball at the Ellison House, he sought an interview with the Commander, prefacing his story with the request that he might be permitted to make a suggestion concerning the subject of his communication.

Obtaining the expected permission, he related a somewhat original and embellished account of the vault, with an accurate description of the map, con-

cluding with the request that the General would send by him an order to General Knox to verify the story and be ready with a report when he arrived that evening to attend the ball. He begged, also, that he might be sent to some other point, under the pretext of bearing a message, so that he might not be compromised with the person who had confidentially told him the secret, by being present when the vault was discovered.

The General listened to the story with undisguised interest and pleasure, which admitted no alloy of suspicion ; indeed, there had been no conceivable ground for doubting the entire good faith of Paschal, and the request was instantly granted, with the secret intention of suitably rewarding the service at an early date.

Taking out his order-book from an inner pocket, he wrote a message to General Knox, directing him to make immediate search for the vault, and concluding by stating that he would not be able to be present until about nine o'clock, when he would be accompanied by his servant Bill ; Mrs. Washington being too indisposed to venture out. This he handed unsealed to the Frenchman, and, being in a kindly mood, took the young man's hand that he might convey his confidence by the sustained and friendly pressure which is ever more eloquent than words, saying as he did so :

"And where shall I send you?"

Paschal did not care, and he said so.

Washington reflected a moment, and then, his eyes suddenly lighting up with a look that unmistakably betrayed his knowledge of the gossip which connected Paschal's name with that of Margaret, asked :

"Will you take a message to Miss Ettrick?"

"Certainly," said poor Paschal, the color creeping up his neck, under the General's continued and amused

gaze, mounting over chin and ear and cheek, precluding the possibility of concealment of the affair of the heart.

“But——”

“That is all right,” interrupted the General, with a characteristic gesture which expressed the thought that he appreciated in advance all that Paschal could say in the way of a modest disclaimer of making such a request, adding :

“I will write the message now, and——” he gave the Frenchman a playfully quizzing look——“an immediate reply is not expected.”

The message he wrote was as follows :

MISS MARGARET ETTTRICK :

RESPECTED MADAM,—If you have any eggs to market, I will esteem it a special favor if you will consider me a customer. The bearer is hereby authorized to negotiate for the same.

Your obt. servant,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

NEWBURGH, May 10th, 1782.

Almost the heart of the spy relented from the contemplated kidnapping, as he stood there within the magnetic influence of the man whose delicacy and true nobility had never so fully impressed him before. It was too late, however, to change, he said to himself, and his thoughts went doggedly to his master in New York, whose two words of promise still rang in his ear. Regaining his composure with marvellous quickness, with a look that betrayed nothing beyond a swain's natural discomfort upon finding his secret known, he took the paper, saying quietly :

“Thank you. Your orders will be obeyed.” Then bowing low, withdrew.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## A RENDEZVOUS, BUT NOT OF LOVERS

As the Frenchman reined up his horse before the Ellison House, which was ablaze with lights, he threw one glance at the old mill, silent and dark ; then, delivering his message to a servant without more delay, rode away as rapidly as possible towards Ettrick Grove. He was usually lavish with his money, but the expectant slave returned empty-handed to the kitchen, sorely disappointed.

"The fine gem'man mus' be losin' at play," was his comment, to which the other negroes added equally wise explanations.

"There will be plenty tossed to us tonight, sho'," another slave said, with the happy optimism of hope and a short memory. "You fellahs should see our dances in ole Virginny ; money jus' throw'd like it was mud on de groun'."

"It's ha'd times, Tom," Sam remonstrated ; then, as the whole force was cheerily summoned by Mrs. Lucy to light more candles in the sconces, discontent was at once forgotten in their interest in the coming ball.

Paschal, meanwhile, oblivious to everything but his own plans, followed the road towards the Ettrick House a short distance, when, finding himself unobserved, he turned into the woods and fastened his horse to a tree upon the brink of the ravine where it overlooked the fisherman's cabin below. While the high banks of the glen were so steep that only cunning Indians could

climb them, and the waters below were dangerous, the Frenchman clambered down with extreme dexterity and caution. He had determined to make himself thoroughly acquainted with all the conditions of the glen, so that his skilfully arranged plan should not fail on account of any unforeseen mischance.

Louis Paschal was a born diplomat. His influence with the Indians was great, on account of his parentage; yet, not daring to trust to that alone, he had by ingenious lies and warnings, led the dozen or more red men who had come to the dance at the Danskamer to believe that evil would befall them if they disregarded his express wishes. He had, moreover, told them that they owed the revival of their sacred rites to his influence with General Washington, and on this account, if for no other, must obey his commands, else the devil would surely punish their falseness to their helper.

It is true that Wounded Knee, the old chief with whom the Frenchman had parleyed at the Danskamer, had called the American's great white man "good;" but a little firewater and many pipes had done much to quiet his scruples and turn his admiration into other channels. Tonight, he waited with eleven others in a secluded place near the still, stolid, sober, and determined. The canoes were near at hand, having been skilfully paddled through the rapids, and it was to this rendezvous that Paschal hastened.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

He had come suddenly upon them. Their copper-colored faces gleamed in the fading twilight of the evening. The whole attitude of the group expressed a stolidity that their half-breed kinsman illy assumed. A nod of the head from each man was the only and all-sufficient answer.



"Are six of you ready for the signal to follow a white man to the old mill?" was next asked, and six heads nodded in reply.

"Are you ready?" was asked a third time, later, at the Irishman's cabin.

This time the answer was in English, and the voices were familiar, the group being composed of Colden, Ettrick, and Jansen.

"Will you come in?"

"No, gentlemen, not yet," Paschal replied, nervously hurrying away over the rough rocks, pausing only to remind Ettrick to be at his post an hour later at the old mill; while the equally excited accomplices urged their leader not to fail in his plan of inveigling the Yankee commander, by some pretext, to walk with him to the mill; or to give them due notice when the fateful moment came.

It was an awful enterprise, yet the Frenchman never flinched in his daring mood, or, if, perchance, his bold spirit faltered for a single instant, a remembrance of Prescott's promise fired his soul to fresh endeavor.

The night grew dark. The moon went under a cloud. It was hard to find one's way through this thicket in daylight; well-nigh impossible now. Paschal was in no mood for rural delights, yet the faint perfume of the waxy arbutus reached his nostrils and filled him with a curious sensation of joy. Then, in sharp contrast, he thought of the consequences if his plan failed; but—it would not fail; it could not fail. Every detail was arranged. Every possibility of disaster averted by his own forethought. Again, he looked forward to the reward, repeating Prescott's two whispered words, while his steps quickened with his heart beats.

The tall trees deepened the darkness over the rush-

ing torrent. A man could be murdered here, and his body lie undiscovered in any hollow crevice unfound for days, perhaps for years. The glen was a thoroughfare for the lawless only, for those daring spirits who cared little what befell their victims. People could be hurried down through these rocky fastnesses ; could be gagged, could be bound, could be carried away. The whole place had an evil report. Not only had the savages committed such villanies as had given the locality the name of Murderer's Creek, but white men also had there perpetrated deeds almost as revolting. In thinking over all this, even at this absorbing moment, Paschal remembered Peggy's boldness in meeting him alone, a mile below, and remembered, with an almost motherly tenderness, the unconscious pathos of pressing his two hands on her breast. Her kiss had not thrilled him, as his had thrilled her ; rather a great wave of pity and shame had swept over his not too clean soul, as something perhaps in the touch of the silent flowers at his feet reminded him of the girl who had heartily thanked her God for sending so sweet a thing as his love into her life. It was no hour for lovers' reminiscence, yet he stopped to wonder if all country girls were like Margaret. Presently, he thought of Sallie, on whose aid he depended, and his question answered itself in the negative.

In a few hours' time America's greatest leader would be bound and gagged, would be hurried over the rocks, and his stifled cries would not save him. There were twelve Indians and five white men against him. Each knew his whole duty. They only waited the signal.

Anticipating this moment of triumph, he raised his eyes to the high heavens above him ; then far and near, above and below, to make sure no one was watching

him. A single spectator might blast every hope of success. Suddenly—another omen—a meteor flashed through the blackness of the night, its trail of fire lighting up shore and bank and river for one single instant.

“Great Spirit, save me from the power of the devil,” cried Paschal. The snake episode still rankled in his memory, and he stood a moment awed and silent, then retraced his steps over the long, difficult path down which he had come, till he again neared the place under which he had left his horse. When he had regained the bank above, he drew from his fob a gold watch,—a highly prized and at that time unusual possession, which had been a gift from General Prescott,—and, making a light by means of a flint on a sharp stone lying in the road, found he had a whole hour to spare before he could expect information, through Sallie’s writing on the window-pane, of General Washington’s arrival at the ball. His accomplices were now waiting, as he had assured himself, at the Still ; Ettrick with his six Indians would be in the mill in an hour’s time, his signal to them would soon follow, and then——

He mounted and rode slowly towards Ettrick Grove, bearing General Washington’s letter to Peggy. Sure of a welcome, he looked forward to a half-hour by the girl’s side as to a respite from anxious care. He was happy in the remembrance of her love.

## CHAPTER XXV

### LUCY KNOX'S "PRETTY FRISK"

It was the night of Mrs. Knox's ball, and the people had gathered from far and near to enjoy the unusual merrymaking. At the end of the small, low-ceilinged room, on the right of the front door, stood the charming hostess, assisted in the task of receiving her many guests by Miss Eliza Van Kortlandt, whose grave face contrasted well with the brightness of Lucy Knox. The hostess this evening looked uncommonly handsome in her rich gown of celestial-blue satin. Her fair throat was uncovered ; a large Italian handkerchief veiled her full bosom, and although she wore no jewels, their lustre was not missed by those who gazed at the sparkling brunette or heard her ever-ready sallies.

The ball was an assured success, because everything Lucy touched succeeded. She believed in herself, and others took her on faith. This was her secret.

However, despite her wit and wisdom, she dared not defy fashion in the matter of hair-dressing ; hence a colored woman, named Sukey Alsdorf, a New Windsor local tonsorial genius, had been kept busy since dawn, twisting, crisping, burning, and generally damaging all the ladies' hair for miles around, in her endeavors to build up monstrosities in the way of pyramidal coiffures, that Paris had declared to be the mode. Tonight, Mrs. Knox's most stately bearing was rendered almost grotesque by the weight of a globe-like edifice, which boasted not only a pair of pink lace wings, but also six blue silk tassels and a huge wreath of artificial roses,

beneath which curious framework dangled half a hundred ringlets arranged in symmetrical tiers. Pushing the most troublesome ones off her white forehead with a somewhat impatient touch, the hostess turned to greet her first guest with that winsome graciousness with which she was ever wont to capture all hearts.

"Dear Anne," she said, bending down to take the tiny hand of the famous Orange County midget,—little Anna Brewster,—the charming dwarf maiden, whom tradition tells us was "too little to be wooed and too wise to be wed."

"Am I the first to come?" asked the small woman, anxiously, reaching up to take the offered hand held down towards her own almost bird-like claw. "I feared to be late."

"Surely, Sukey did not keep you waiting, or fail to visit you, sweet one," answered Lucy, looking admiringly at the toppling flaxen head-dress on the girl's head. "Do you know, you have outdone Scripture this evening, and added more than a single cubit to your stature."

"Is it really so? Well, I am glad; for, do you know, I was asked only yesterday—the invitation came by an express—to pay a visit to the Headquarters at Newburgh; because, forsooth, Mrs. Washington wanted to see a real dwarf?" Tears stood in the child-woman's eyes as she whispered these words; but Mrs. Knox's cheery response chased them away before they had time to fall upon the artlessly painted and powdered cheeks.

"Oh, child," she laughed, "you are absolutely conceited about your nothingness! Mrs. Washington has met both the great and small in her wide travels everywhere, and has not waited to see big and little

folk before coming up the Hudson. I am certain she asked you to visit her, because she had heard that you were wise and discreet ; and, moreover, she has many officers to entertain. Captain Jonathan Ford is at the headquarters, and it is said he is looking for a wife. Who knows what might not happen if he saw our New Windsor *petite !*"

"But he adores Peggy Ettrick," said Anne ; "and, because she will have none of him, he will not look at any one else."

"Then, there is the Frenchman."

"Ah, I do not like him. He makes love to all, and is true to none."

"Pretty misanthrope ! Well, shall I tell you that your gown is fine tonight ? Are you not afraid that the shades of your Pilgrim grandfather, Elder Brewster, will return to reprove you for such vanities ?"

"Not I," scoffed Anne, shaking out her taffeta flounces, quite mollified ; "nor of my great aunt Betsey, who smeared her face with grease and soot to show the folks at meeting that she had renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil."

"She would have had no need of mortifying herself had she lived in New Windsor and humbly tried to get a few decent things together for this little dance. General Knox says I have had more pother than the grand people who gave the famous Meschianza in Philadelphia. Ah, well-a-day, what are you hiding in your pocket, my pet ? A love letter ?"

"It is a copy of some anonymous verses I got today," the wee woman answered, drawing from the silk bag at her side the following effusion, which history attributes to some rustic poet whose name is unfortunately forgotten. The girl handed to Mrs. Knox the blue fool's-

cap sheet on which the lines were coarsely written with a home-made quill ; and later, when alone, the amused hostess read the following acrostic :

A pretty, charming little creature,  
Neat and complete in every feature,  
Now, at New Windsor may be seen,  
All beauteous in her air and mien.  
Birth and power, wealth and fame,  
Rise not to view when her we name ;  
Every virtue in her shine,  
Wisely nice, but not o'er fine.  
She has a soul that's great, 'tis said,  
Though small's the body of this maid :  
E'en though the casket is but small,  
Reason proclaims the jewel's all.

"Your rooms look very proper," Miss Anne said, after she had seen Mrs. Knox carefully stow away the poetry in the bosom of her gown,—then, as now, pocketless woman's only hiding-place. As she spoke, Miss Brewster glanced through the narrow doorway, across the hall into the dining-room, where a table covered with dainties could be seen, while attendant slaves stood about, rolling the whites of their eyes, as if no such feast had ever been seen before, in the old world or the new.

From a room beyond, one heard the preparatory sound of fiddles squeaking, till little Anne, who never lacked for partners tall and short, felt her tiny feet aching to tread a measure. These were the old days of stately ceremony, however, and she stood, therefore, a model of propriety, by the lady of the house, while arriving guests filed past singly and in twos and threes. For tonight's entertainment, Mrs. Knox had been obliged to send to New Paltz, and even to far away

Kingston, lest too many brave soldiers be in the sulks for lack of partners. Several tall officers of the Lifeguards made a brave showing in their white-faced blue coats, white waistcoats and breeches, high black stocks and neat half-gaiters, all carrying in their ungloved sunburnt hands the well-known round hats with the nodding blue and white feathers.

Among the distinguished guests were the stern Steuben and Major Belden, with his pretty, smooth-faced daughter Mary, a girl whose unruffled amiability among her mates had won her a wreath of white roses, the school prize in earlier days, at what would now be called Commencement time. Miss Mary's sweet temper contrasted amusingly with her father's fiery disposition, which was as noted in its own way as the girl's.

"Egad, sir," Belden said to Knox, who emerged from a pantry, where all his war tactics had failed to prevent considerable punch being drunk in the mixing; "I had an adventure in Weigand's tavern. By George, I hit the fellow; I did, General; I slapped his face, sir, because he said I lied. Said I lied. Damn his impudence!"

"Who was it?" asked the general of the excited speaker.

"Ford; Captain Ford, they call him. I don't understand how General Washington can keep such a scoundrel around his headquarters."

"Why, he will be here tonight."

"I don't believe he will come. He will be afraid to meet me——"

"Plain John afraid!" Colonel Hasbrouck said with a ring of surprise in his voice. "He hasn't challenged you yet?"

"Not yet."



"Then you expect it?"

"Oh, yes," answered Major Belden, with undisguised antipathy; "I presume I shall be obliged to meet him once more."

"He is a perfect shot, you know," said Knox.

"That may be; but the person challenged has the choice of weapons, and I shall choose swords. If I need a second, may I——"

"What was the trouble?" interrupted Knox, not desiring to be compelled to decline to act in the capacity of second in a foolish quarrel between two of his friends.

"The talk at the tavern ran on the Frenchman. I said I would not allow my daughter Mary to take lessons from him. One tongue is enough for a woman."

"You would scarcely fight over that, Major? Captain Ford is a bachelor, and has no girls to be taught divers tongues."

"Oh, well, I said that the Frenchman was not to be trusted; that he had made a fool of that Ettrick girl down by Murderer's Creek. Is she here tonight? Pretty faced chit; 'tis a pity her father is such a crotchety fellow. Pity, too, he hasn't the sense to look after his girl."

"Well, what next?" this from several who came directly from the punch-bowl to give audience to this unexpected bit of gossip.

"What next? Why, Ford shouted, '*Major, you lie!*' and so I slapped his face, gentlemen. Ha, ha, ha! I gave him a blow he'll long remember. Was I not right? Tell me, sir; was I not right?"

The approach of the ladies put an end to the talk, and relieved General Knox from making a reply. Turning to Miss Mary, who now drew timidly up to her father, he told her, ponderously, that she was look-

ing fairer than the dawn ; immediately following up this compliment by another as acceptable to Miss Rita Brinckerhoff, who leaned on the arm of Baron Steuben.

"Have you been fishing lately?" asked Knox, waggishly, of the baron.

"I to the ladies appeal," replied the big, brave Steuben, blushing like a girl, but not altogether averse to speaking of this joke upon himself. "If I caught a whale in the Hudson River, it is more than you ever did," and he looked at Knox as if that person were effectually silenced.

"Did you really catch a whale in the Hudson?" asked Major Belden.

"So I told Mrs. Washington at dinner, and she at my blunder laughed and laughed and laughed."

"Then it wasn't a whale after all?"

"No. I told General Washington that it was larger than a walkingstick, and very slippery ; and he asked if I 'didn't mean an eel.' Then, when I asked if they were not the same, they laughed harder than before."

"You make no blunder in drilling the troops," was the host's suave reply, as the baron, who had enjoyed his own story, passed on into another room with the charming Rita.

The next arrival was that of a party of ladies, Maria Colden being the most conspicuous in the group. There were suppressed murmurs of envy and admiration afloat now, one girl being heard to say, with sharp distinctness :

"Well, she may look fine. See her coiffure ! The mean thing kept Sukey two hours over time, and Mary Belden had to have her hair dressed at five o'clock this morning, and sit in her crimping-pins all this long day, afraid of the least breath of wind. I say it is a

shame. Maria queens it over all Newburgh, and nobody dares oppose her."

"Nobody dares oppose her uncle, either," another maiden, versed in politics, added, knowingly.

"Where is he?" asked some one.

"In the card-room, maybe——"

"Sipping the general's excellent punch."

"Maria does not seem to feel bashful without him."

"She knows her worth——"

"In money bags?"

"Hush!"

"Her red hair looks like gold."

"They say she is to open the ball with General Washington himself," said another feminine voice.

"Why is she selected for such an honor?"

"Why does not Mrs. Knox open her own ball herself?" asked the first speaker. "Is she not too lovely tonight in that heavenly blue gown over the white satin petticoat?"

"Hush, Gossip, have you not heard? It may be idle scandal, but they say that Mrs. Washington has a bit of the green-eyed monster in her eye; just a tiny bit, you understand; and she doesn't like pretty Lucy over well, and the General is too good a man to tease his dear wife."

"Fie, then; if I had so brave and honorable a husband, I would trust him; and pray, tell me, is that why Mrs. Martha stops away tonight? Surely, she need give herself no airs above the rest of us plain people, if it does happen that she has a manor in Virginia!"

"She is slightly 'indisposed,' I hear," was the more guarded answer, as the gossip began to fear she had spoken over boldly of that excellent lady.

"Well, we shall all envy Maria when she is led out

in the minuet, I confess ; but I will be generous enough to say that I think she will bear herself with credit." The speaker sighed, and her companion fanned herself with a gorgeous ostrich feather affair, as if she also needed air and solace in such affliction.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE MINUET

Grandma told me all about it,  
Told me so I couldn't doubt it,  
How she danced, my grandma danced,  
Long ago, long ago !

Modern ways are quite alarming,  
Grandma says,—but boys were charming,—  
Girls and boys, I mean, of course,  
Long ago, long ago !

How she held her pretty head,  
How her dainty skirts she spread,  
Turning out her little toes,  
How she slowly turned and rose,  
Long ago, long ago !

Bless her, why she wears a cap,  
Grandma does, and takes a nap  
Every single day, and yet—  
Grandma danced the minuet  
Long ago, long ago !

A HUSH fell upon the company when Washington arrived. His hair was powdered and tied behind with a ribbon ; his coat and breeches were of plain black velvet ; silver buckles shone on his pointed shoes. At his side there hung a dress sword in a white leather scab-

bard ; in his hand, on which he wore a yellow kid glove, he carried his three-cornered hat. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance ; he but wore with grace the usual full evening dress of the period, yet no one looked at him without a feeling of admiration, mingled with awe. His presence, tonight, was considered a compliment to both General and Mrs. Knox, since it was widely known that he rarely attended social gatherings.

He bowed over his hostess's hand, after the manner of the day,—handshaking in the last century being not at all required on formal occasions,—then walked slowly through the parlor, across the narrow hall into the card-room, where a few men sat playing. Returning, he passed the punch-bowl, without pausing, back to Mrs. Knox's side, one of his rare, bright smiles lighting up his grave face as he looked at her. Lucy dimpled, coquetted with her feather fan, tossed her ringlets, raised her flashing eyes, then, with a curtsy, said :

“ If it please your Excellency, I would feel delighted to have you favor my guest, Miss Maria Colden, by your escort through the minuet.”

General Washington bowed assent, and presently Miss Maria found herself the chosen partner of the evening. It was a proud moment. She curtsied, he returning the compliment with a low reverence ; he offered his arm, she touched it with her finger-tips ; and, thus deferentially guided, took her place by his side at one end of the absurdly small salon. One smiles, today, at the remembrance of all this ceremony in a parlor not twenty feet wide ; and yet it was Washington who made the occasion memorable ; the chief who has glorified the memory of far humbler homes.

“ Plays, masques, jesters, gladiators, tumblers, and

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jugglers," quoted Colonel Hasbrouck, somewhat gravely, as he watched Maria glide with mincing steps by General Washington's side, "are to be tolerated, lest the people should do worse than attend them. Burton knew this when he was writing on 'Melancholy'; yet it surprises me to see our Commander-in-Chief take part with so much enthusiasm."

"The General will attend well to the business in hand, be it peace or war," Major Belden said, his uncertain temper appearing to be somewhat allayed.

"I was ever in favor of dancing for maidens," an old lady remarked, her head nodding to the fiddling as she spoke. "At home in England we danced on the green each Mayday, and many other seasons as well. My father believed such an open pastime most innocent and a wholesome outlet for the natural gayety of young people. Do you not think I am right, Dominie?" turning to a grave-faced preacher who stood by her side.

"Pardon me, madam," was the response in the polite undertone of one who felt himself obliged to bear witness, yet hesitated to appear discourteous on the occasion; "in my opinion, one dance leads to another, and I think no Christian should encourage such indiscretions as 'Hunting the Squirrel,' or the 'Cushion Dance,' which last is but an idle excuse for the lads to kiss their partners without reproof."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the immensely tickled dame. "Surely, you would almost make it a criminal offence for a man to kiss his wife." The officers, who had been exchanging boastful stories, now came up and joined in the discussion.

Meanwhile the dignified minuet went on; the slow measure well suiting the stately couple who led it.

With one hand the carefully taught Maria held her yellow satin skirt, with the other she touched her partner's ; then dropped his hand ; stepped towards him and away ; peeped at him from under her curved arm ; curtsied ; and again retreated.

It is an old dance, this seventeenth century minuet, one which was particularly popular at the time of the Revolution, and not quite forgotten in our own day. The minuet was borrowed from the French, hence it lacks the romping fun of a Maypole frolic. It brings to the mind ladies and gentlemen in full dress, rather than milk-maids on the village green. The distinguishing characteristic is the small, short step, the petiteness, from which it gets its name. There is a *coupée*, a high step and a balance, which are done over and over again. There are long, deliberate pauses in a minuet ; there is no nervous American haste, no modern hurryscurry, but, instead, grace, dignity, and an unmistakable flavor of high-breeding.

Tonight, the negroes scraping their fiddles grew a trifle excited to see the "Gineral" dance, and once in a while they nearly forgot their own part in the performance to watch this unusual exhibition.

Maria bore herself well. She knew when to peep at her august partner, with a dash of coquetry that did not border on familiarity ; when to raise her blue eyes ; when to let them fall ; and, best of all, she was able to sustain throughout that calm demeanor which stamps this dance as an amusement of elegant leisure.

"Gem'men take partners—chawsay—ladies balance partners—farrard opposite—promenade all," shouted the musician. After the close of the minuet, the merry-making became more lively, and the company began to warm up to the festivity. In the brief pauses, the

dancers fanned their fair companions with their painted fans, airing at the same time the daintiest compliments. There is a witchery in a woman's fan handled with grace, and many were the coy glances and daring advances made now in these sweet intervals behind the airy nothingness of fandom. Officers grew bold and prim maidens tender. There seemed to be a spirit singing in the violin's minor undertones, which said to the soul :

While I am I and you are you,  
So long as the world contains us both ;  
Me the loving, you the loath,  
While the one eludes,  
Must the other pursue.

The powdered heads were tossed in vain, the filmy lace handkerchiefs flirted, real blushes vied with rouge on the painted cheeks, ever the loving pursued the loath, till escape for the nonce was out of the question. And this is what a dance in our great-grandmothers' day meant ; and this is what it means today. Thus the world goes round. There are men on it and women on it ; whirling towards each other, whirling away from each other ; slow step, quick step ; waltz and minuet ; and a pretty fair sort of a thing life is after all.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### SCRATCHED ON A WINDOW-PANE

THERE was probably but one woman present at the ball who did not envy Miss Maria Colden, and that one was Miss Sallie Jansen. Sallie sat in a deep window-seat, in a room back of the parlor, idly watching the



flash of the diamond on her finger. She was perfectly happy, being but a silly little coquette, without sufficient understanding to be anxious concerning the promise she had made the Frenchman, or to worry over the magnitude of her possible duty in complying with his half-explained wishes. She had only a single thought, but that was all satisfying to her vanity. Every one has a public before which it is the highest heaven to appear, and Sallie's public was the little Newburgh world. She regretted Peggy's absence as much as Margaret herself, since rumor had made her aware of Paschal's admiration for Miss Ettrick. To-night it was not Miss Ettrick who wore the diamond on her finger ; it was not Miss Ettrick who had been chosen to assist the Frenchman. Doubtless Sallie believed herself to be in a most enviable position ; and later, when she married the fascinating Paschal and sailed with him down the river in a sloop ; sailed with him across the ocean,—ah, well-a-day ! would Maria remember her slow minuet with General Washington, or Gitty Wyncoop, that her sleeves were the biggest in the room, and her hair puffed in the highest pyramids ? Sallie looked again at her diamond and was truly happy.

Her revery was broken presently by Captain Ford, who, in his vain search for Margaret, now peeped under the heavy moreen curtains which hid Miss Jansen, and then started back with surprise. With characteristic bluntness, his first remark was such as to invite an instant answer to his dearest wish :

"I was looking for some one ; but I fear I have disturbed you, Miss Jansen."

"Oh, no, not at all," Sallie replied, brightly ; "only you will look in vain for Margaret Ettrick, as——" here she lowered her voice, "she was not invited."

"Ah," said the captain, shortly, his thoughts reverting to the duel which hung over him, and fearing that the gossip concerning it might compromise the name of the lady whom he wished to defend. Miss Jansen let her diamond flash before his eyes, but said nothing to relieve the silence. It is dull sometimes for one girl to talk about another.

"We are both alone," Ford began, stumblingly.

"I thought 'two was company,'" Sallie retorted, pertly.

"I beg your pardon."

"Granted, sir."

Silence again; then, with a desperate effort to be agreeable, Captain Ford asked: "For whom does Miss Jansen tarry? Is it fair to the other gallants for her to sit here hiding?"

"Mr. Paschal said——" began Sallie, then suddenly checked herself. She had kept faith with her lover with some feminine reservations, and now, when she mentioned his name, Ford remembered the gossip that had reported something of Paschal's recent attentions to this fair lady. His heart lightened most unreasonably, and he noticed the diamond on the girl's hand with a distinct thrill of joy. It was possible, after all, that he had been mistaken in believing the Frenchman to be in love with Margaret, or the reverse,—Margaret in love with the Frenchman. It was, of course, Sallie, and in a moment the artless creature would tell him everything he wished to know. Alas for unsophisticated Ford! Miss Jansen might flash one man's diamonds, and yet hold in reserve the privilege of flashing her eyes at another,—all the while keeping her own love secrets.

"I have something to tell you, if I may," the man said.

"Pray make haste, sir."

"Which would you prefer,—a compliment or a secret?"

"There is more novelty in a secret, Captain Ford."

"Can I trust you?"

"Of course you may trust me," pouting rather prettily.

"Do you swear it?"

She hesitated. In the few romances she had read, it was the man who swore to be faithful, not the woman.

"I must know what it is first."

"I will tell you, if you will first tell me what this diamond on your finger means."

The girl was herself again, as this was the very question she had longed to be asked. "Oh, it is a—a—token a friend gave me the other day."

"A love token?"

"Oh, well, it is a secret. I must not tell. I—I must know your secret first before I tell you mine."

"My secret is a grim affair; it is that I have something to do soon that will be remembered long after this dance is over and the dancers are dead."

Sallie shuddered. They did not hesitate in old times to speak often of death. There was a vacant chair at every feast, an absent one to be lovingly remembered at every family gathering. Thousands had fallen on the battlefields; yet tonight, amid patches and powder, within sound of light laughter and merry music, surely it was in questionable taste thus to speak. The fiddlers were tuning up, and Ford had no excuse to be gloomy.

"Why do you say that?" the girl asked, half frightened.

"Because I am in earnest, and wish you also to be

serious and help me." The tone was stern ; the young fellow looked old in his anxiety as he added, with a heavy-hearted laugh, "It is only a duel which will occur soon ; but please tell me, is Louis Paschal really your lover?"

There was an instant's pause. Sallie longed to speak of her triumph ; but while she hesitated, restrained half by fear and half by an innate love of teasing, a group of tired dancers suddenly invaded the hitherto unoccupied room. They approached the window-seat, but before the curtains which hid the two in the recess were thrown apart, a voice said, clearly, "Hush ! they are there, Maria."

"Prithee, my dear Gitty, why may I not rest in this quiet corner?"

"He is there with Sallie."

"More shame to them both for playing hide and seek."

"Oh, stop, Maria !"

"Why should I stop ? Sallie must not monopolize our best dancer. The Frenchman must do his duty by the rest of us ; and moreover, Sallie, too, must do her part entertaining the stupid men."

"Spare us, Miss Colden," Ford said, revealing himself, and rising from his somewhat cosy position by pretty Miss Jansen. "We poor men have but the wits heaven gave us ; we would be other an' we could." This was a brave speech for the captain, and it amused Maria immensely. She struck the speaker lightly with her fan as she answered : "Ah, sir, mourn not the absent fair," quoting a rhyme less threadbare a century ago :

What care I how fair she be,  
If she be not fair for me?

"You here, too, Sallie?" Miss Colden continued, when the applause her remark had elicited died away; "do you know, love, you look quite moped? and, la! how you have flattened your head-dress against the window-pane. Are you ill?"

"Are you faint, Miss Jansen?" asked an officer with considerable solicitude in his tone. He was one of the many who had lacked for partners, and was eager to appropriate the hand of this waiting lady.

"Sweet one," said Gitty Wyncoop, with genuine interest, "let me do up this ringlet, and make you all tidy before any one remarks your disorder."

"Thanks, my love," Sallie responded, marshalling all her aplomb to hide her disappointment. "I was tired with dancing," she continued, "and the music was so loud it made my head ache." It is to be hoped this uncalled-for bit of dissimulation was blotted out by the angelic recorder above. Slanderous cynics have said that women are but hunted animals, to whom deceit is ever a ready cover.

"The ball is a merry one," another officer urged; "come, we are to have a Virginia reel in honor of Mrs. Washington, although the General is here without her."

"Has General Washington come?" asked Sallie, horrified to think she had almost forgotten to give the promised signal to Paschal, by writing her name on the glass. No thought of possible danger to Washington came to her mind; her one absorbing fear was lest Paschal should cease to love her if she failed him in this undertaking. Men were at best too insistent, she reflected; for now Captain Ford's strange urgency had put the earlier given pledge quite out of her head. She looked at the diamond to reassure herself of the French-

man's faithfulness, and, as she did so, drew the ring from her finger and scrawled her name on the window.

"Why, what are you doing?" asked Gitty. "Will not Mrs. Knox be vexed? Let me try," she added, snatching the ring from its owner and scribbling her name below Sallie's.

"It cuts almost like a real diamond," Miss Colden said, patronizingly; "let me write, too, and then we three will always be remembered as——"

"The belles of Mrs. Knox's ball," finished one of the men, while the others bowed assent. Captain Ford said nothing, yet he watched Sallie closely, as she took her ring back from Maria's hand, hoping by look or word to secure an answer to his question. He watched in vain, however; for giddy Sallie had no mind to confess an intimacy with one man to another whom she fancied craved a like preference. She presently drew her kid glove over her diamond with utmost nonchalance, and, resting her fingers on the arm of a partner, followed the crowd back into the parlor.

"The ring is beautiful; the diamond looks real," Ford heard Maria say.

"It *is* real, Maria." This was said angrily.

Poor Ford having given his confidence in vain, and finding he was not essential in the conversation, decided, on the impulse of the moment, to slip away from the ball for an hour and ride over to Ettrick Grove, to learn from Margaret's own lips whether or not she was engaged to his hated rival. He felt himself to be hanging like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, and wished to know the worst—or the best.

"Sallie is a little simpleton," Miss Colden said, in a polite aside; "we were glad to have her visit us, because, in her home in New Paltz, she is sadly moped.

My uncle wished her to see the world as I see it." This was the last word, for nobody dared contradict the Colden family.

Jonathan Ford, all unconscious of the Frenchman's menacing plot, rode away unobserved, and the ball went on without him.

Washington, after the first minuet, stood somewhat aside, although he talked pleasantly to all present, particularly to his hostess, whose face brightened at his approach. After all, whether the occasion be grave or serious, the action slight or momentous, the actors important persons or of small account, there are but two social factors in life, but two sorts of people,—men and women ; hence gossip.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A CIPHER DECIPHERED

THE first discordant occurrence of the evening was when the tall clock on the stairs insisted upon striking out its ten o'clock homily upon the "passing of time," regardless of the fact that it was half a tone below the key of the music in the adjoining room and was rudely obtrusive, as is a person who refuses to talk confidentially in a low tone. Then, also, no one wished to be reminded of the hour. General Washington, who was holding an informal reception at the foot of the stairs, against which he was leaning, did not ; for he was stopped in the middle of what he was saying to General Knox by the intruding sound, and he turned with a smile to glance at the clock's solemn face, which expressed no sympathy with the frivolities below. The

hostess certainly did not, for there had been unexpected delays in making the syllabub, and she had been called to the kitchen to give needed advice as to sundry other culinary arrangements. Out on the road, Mr. Jansen, who stepped into the woods to let Captain Ford pass him unobserved, wondered only as to where Paschal could be ; and other thoughts than that of time were uppermost in the mind of the Frenchman, who was just then hurriedly leaving the Ettrick House. With a self-satisfied persistence, however, that has no parallel except in the small boy at table with his long story which he tells on to the bitter end, the clock at last completed its unmodulated warning, and then the Commander-in-Chief looked at his Chief-of-Artillery, who stood on the first step of the stairs the better to equalize their height, and said :

"I was about to ask what you found in the vault of which I wrote?"

"We made an immediate search, Tilghman and I. We thought it best to have no servants around," said Knox ; "and although we had never suspected such a thing, we soon found the place under the floor."

Washington looked pleased, but waited the completion of the story without offering interruption.

"The opening was walled in like a cellar, but only about as big as a caisson," measuring off four feet with his hands ; "and in it was a small box, with a key in the lock."

"Which you waited to examine until I should come?"

"Exactly." There was a perfect understanding between the men so different physically, and the eyes of General Knox met those of his Commander confidently and inquiringly.



"Find Tilghman and let us look it over," said Washington, adding : "he can easily secure a substitute with the ladies."

The little upper west back bedroom seemed well filled when these three men stood at the side and foot of the bed to which the box was lifted from its place of concealment underneath. As the tallest of the company stooped low to turn the key and throw back the cover, exclamations of disappointment greeted the nearly empty interior. They were stopped, however, by Washington, who said :

"Wait ! Here is a paper and a key," and took out the only things which the box contained. Unfolding the paper, it proved to be a rudely sketched map of the Hudson River, with different places along its course marked by letters and figures. Stepping near the candles and adjusting his spectacles, Washington scanned it carefully and then handed it to his lieutenants, with the query :

"What do you make of it?"

They both studied it for some time in silence, and then Tilghman pointed to the letters, saying :

"We need another 'key' to understand what they mean."

"I think the same applies to those figures," said Knox. "That '10' at Newburgh can't mean anything by itself."

Washington resumed his study of the map, at last remarking : "I think you are both right," and he turned the paper towards them with his thumb indicating the upper left-hand corner.

It was held near and again at arm's length by each ; but all to no purpose. The writing to which their attention had been called was as follows :

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*"Fo urm il lst rea mspi ritss il verk ey."*

"What do you think it is?" asked the Commander.

"I see it is Latin," said Knox, making a desperate effort to maintain his reputation for scholarship; "but it has been a long time since I have read any——" He left the sentence unfinished.

Washington looked at Tilghman, who adopted the safer plan of admitting that he did not know what it was.

"I think that this, too, is something in cipher," remarked Washington, "but I can't make it out;" and he resumed the examination of the cabalistic inscription. At last he said: "I think I know who wrote it." Taking from an inner pocket a letter he had recently received from Richard Colden, he compared the writing, and pointed out to the others several corresponding peculiarities.

"If it hadn't been for a 'previous engagement,' Colden would have been here tonight," said Knox.

"Why, Colden, only yesterday, claimed to be a patriot!" exclaimed Tilghman.

"This writing proves that he is a Tory, and that he lied," replied Washington without hesitation, seating himself, while Tilghman took the only remaining chair, and Knox dropped down upon the edge of the bed, sinking deep into the feather tick; and, taking his knee up between his locked fingers, gazed from one to the other, as if mutely inquiring who beside themselves could be trusted.

"It makes no difference now," said Washington; "it is too late; only—one does not enjoy being deceived;" and he resumed a study of the inscription on the map. Presently, he became so absorbed in this oc-

cupation that when a servant knocked at the door with the request from Mrs. Knox for her husband to come to her assistance, and he asked to be excused, Washington's unheeding reply was : "Do not let me detain you, gentlemen." Considering that this was equivalent to a request for them both to withdraw, they quietly retired, leaving the Commander still looking intently at the strange writing.

Whatever the process of deciphering had been, the conclusion, which was soon reached, seemed to satisfy him ; for he took from his pocket the portable writing outfit, that had been presented to him by General Lafayette, and wrote the following words underneath the cipher inscription :

*" Four mill stream spirits silver key."*

Comparing the two, and finding the letters followed in the same order, he smiled as he recalled what Knox had said about not having read Latin for some time ; but the problem had not been fully solved, and, snuffing the candle with his thumb and finger, as was often done in cases of emergency like the present, and subsequently transferring some of the black from the burned wick to his face, in the preoccupied rubbing of his finger-tips backwards and forwards across his forehead, as he studied and pondered, he finally evolved a solution, with which apparently he was satisfied. Again the words were written underneath the other lines, but this time in the following order :

*" Silver Stream mill key four spirits."*

"Silver Stream," he said to himself, "is the name of the creek which runs by this house. The only 'mill'

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on Silver Stream is the one nearby at the head of the ravine. The 'key' is probably the key in the box, and 'four' means four barrels. Four barrels of spirits are in the Silver Stream mill, and may be found by using this key."

It is doubtful if he ever felt more pleasure over any military success than he did over thus unlocking this mystery. True, the words were capable of other constructions, but Washington was satisfied in his own mind that he had guessed correctly. His pleasure was not due to the mental victory alone,—although he was fully sensible of that,—but, he reflected, "our doctors are very much in need of supplies for the hospitals, and this will be what they most desire."

Washington was on the point of seeking his late companions to relate his discovery, when he remembered that the key found in the box might not be the right one, and then, too, the "spirits" might have been removed long before. He therefore decided to take no one into his confidence until he could prove that his interpretation of the cipher was correct.

The same desire for exactness that had often led him to go on tours of inspection of his picket lines, unaccompanied and late at night, now made him disregard every other consideration than that of the seeming discourtesy of withdrawing, even temporarily, from the house during the ball. He determined, however, to meet this difficulty as best he might; and, satisfying himself that his pocket flint and tinder were in order, he took a candle and the key from the box and left the room. The music and dancing in the rooms below were not interrupted by his coming down stairs, but many were the broken confidences suffered by couples there seated, whose sprightly small talk, colored here

and there by loving words and glances, he was obliged to disturb. Strangely enough, the hall chanced to be otherwise clear ; so with head uncovered, as if to get a breath of outside air, he stepped out on the porch and went on his way to the mill, quite unobserved.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### ANIMATED SHADOWS

MIDSUMMER heat and drought had not yet come to make Silver Stream unable to give power and life to the old mill, and yet the wheel had not turned for many a month ; while the slender stream, night and day, rushed hurriedly on through the neglected flume and escaped down into the glen.

No other moving thing passed the mill, especially at night, without looking back at the broken windows across which boards had been nailed, to make sure that no imp of evil threatened to sally forth in pursuit ; but Silver Stream exhibited neither timidity nor hesitation. Long, coiling, sinuous, living, never resting, it slipped down into the deeper darkness of the avoided recesses of the glen ; now turning like a porpoise, playing and lashing the water into foam ; again gliding around rocks like a serpent ; footless, legless, even headless, it fascinated all who approached it with its beauty and agility, and hypnotized them into drowsiness with its ceaseless droning monotone. The unused sluice-gate under the mill was covered with festooned decorations of long, green water moss, harmonizing in color with the glove-fitting suits worn by an orchestra of sleek frogs beneath, whose ideas of harmony represented a

different school of music from that recognized by the distant fiddlers.

The sounds of the passing stream and the croaking frogs were not the only noises which might have been heard about the mill that Friday evening, and had there been passers-by, they would have had their worst suspicions confirmed, for several pairs of black eyes often peered out from the windows between the boards ; while the creaking floors betrayed the presence of something more substantial than phantom bodies.

Since the Frenchman's trip of investigation through the glen, an hour or two before, Ettrick and the Indians had taken possession of the mill, with a strange equipment of ropes and cloths, which they divided among themselves. The Indians, with catlike instinct, immediately followed each other on a tour through every nook and corner of the structure, the growing darkness making the figures look like the ghosts of former customers, as they flitted about the wheel and *débris* below, the mill-stones and carrier-boxes on the main floor, and the storage-boxes in the upper loft. Only an office near the door and an obscure store-room underneath escaped their scrutiny.

The office was occupied by Ettrick, who there awaited the return of his dusky associates from their prowling expedition, while the little room directly underneath was so small and difficult of approach that its existence would hardly have been suspected in broad daylight.

The lagging time gave Ettrick abundant opportunity to review his relation to the enterprise in hand, but, as there seemed no reason to suspect failure, his mind reverted to the anticipated reward, when they should arrive with the prize at New York, the following day.

The inquiring face of his daughter presented itself to his mind and awaited his disposition. He had considered her before, but could not improve upon the plan of—doing absolutely nothing. He confessed that the arrangement did not suit him, but, he reasoned, if she could prove her entire ignorance of the plot, and show that no arrangement had been made to secure her escape or safety, she would not be apt to suffer any serious personal annoyance.


The approaching Indians demanded his attention, and assigning them to their posts behind the mill-stones, where by lying down they were securely concealed, he resumed his position and began to think over and arrange the speech with which he would greet Sir Henry Clinton. True, they must pass the chain at West Point, the pickets at Verplanck's and other points below ; but as the chain had been made to stop larger craft, and was buoyed at intervals only, and as the Indians knew the river like an open book, there seemed to be no just grounds for fear or doubt. He became so absorbed in weaving the bright pattern of his fancy, that he was hardly conscious of the passing of time, and was startled when a low triple knock was heard at the door. Recognizing it as the prearranged signal from Mr. Colden, he cautiously admitted him ; and the two made hurried interchange of whispered words.

"Is Washington at the house?" asked Ettrick.

"Yes ; the signal Paschal told us to look for—the name on the window-pane—is there," Colden answered. He did not mention whose name, not wishing to implicate his niece ; "but where is the Frenchman?"

"He hasn't been here. I haven't seen him since he came to the Still."

"Where can he be?"



"I am sure I don't know," said Ettrick, the possibility of failure for the first time occurring to him with disconcerting effect.

"It isn't late yet," replied Colden, reassuringly, "and the best we can do is to be ready. He will be here surely. He has good reasons for being detained, you may depend."

The plot was again reviewed, but they agreed that nothing could be done until Paschal should come, and were on the point of parting, when a strange voice arrested their attention. Listening, they heard through the unfastened door, with startling distinctness, the unexpected words :

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

The voice and the words alike proved that the one who approached was alone, and with an instinctive impulse they simultaneously whispered the one word,—  
"Washington."

They were eight to one, but the name they spoke gave them a sense of detection and filled them with alarm and fear, and they tiptoed as quickly as possible to where the Indians lay secreted, and crowded down beside them.

"Thou turnest man to destruction," continued the voice, repeating reverently the words of a favorite psalm which had sustained and encouraged the speaker at Valley Forge, when only a realization of the everlasting purposes of the Lord could lift him from the discouragement of his surroundings ; and now, in the



darkness, it renewed and confirmed his faith, as he added : "and sayest, return, ye children of men."

To the conspirators these words of warning and prediction seemed to point to "destruction" unless they "returned," so apt was their significance.

To Washington, the influence of the decaying mill ; the shallow, unstable stream ; the transitory gayety at the house from whence the sounds faintly reached him ; the melancholy call of a mourning dove nearby in the thicket ; the murmur of the stream below, and of the branches of the trees overhead, all commingled in his consciousness, with the damp odor of the place, to give him pleasure in his isolation and freedom from restraint.

Why did the opening of the door let in so cold a draught? Ettrick and Colden felt the heat retreating from their finger-tips and ears, while their former confidence gave place to a sickening sense of future danger.

It took Washington but a moment to strike a spark into the tinder and light the tallow dip, and his next work was to begin the search,—first of the office, then, passing near where the men were lying, he turned and went up the creaking stairs and about the upper room ; returning, the flickering light was carried down into the room below, and finally back to the point of starting. Evidently he was unsuccessful. Crossing the floor again to where the mill-stones stood, Washington turned about and looked up and down the room.

What was to prevent the eight shadows which lay along the floor, and looked so much like men, from suddenly rising and strangling the light and the voice?

Absolutely nothing at all, except the absence of the leader for whom they waited. One of the Indians rose silently, and, reaching out, almost grasped the long

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gray cue of hair hanging within easy reach ; but Ettrick pulled him back, and he sank again into an apparently inanimate shadow.

Washington did not long remain silent, for the stillness of the mill was again broken by the words : " Only one place is unaccounted for, and that is the space under the office. I can find no door there, and yet——" He moved with decision to the office, as if a thought had occurred to him, and began to carefully examine the floor. He moved the rubbish and looked underneath, and finally, with some exertion, lifted up the hearthstone of the fireplace. Again his face lighted with indescribable satisfaction, but he hurriedly arose and stepped backwards, to avoid the offensiveness of the air which escaped from the enclosed space beneath. Then he tried to penetrate the darkness by holding the candle where its rays could strike below into the inky blackness. He groped with his bare hand into the cavity, yet discovered nothing.

How a hand so firm and exact could have relaxed at the critical moment has never been explained ; but at the time of rising, the burning dip slipped from his fingers and fell to the bottom, where it almost instantly ignited a quantity of tinder-like rubbish, piled over and about some barrels, which had long before been securely boarded and nailed in from below.

In a moment the flames blazed up through the opening in the floor in a threatening manner.

*The mill was on fire !*

## CHAPTER XXX

## CINDERELLA SUSPECTS HER FAIRY PRINCE

CROUCHING by the big open fireplace, on whose highly polished brass andirons a few logs burned redly, Margaret sat, a veritable Cinderella left home from the prince's ball. Tonight, there was no prospect of a visit from a fairy godmother ; no magic wand would change her homespun frock into a dress fit for Mrs. Knox's dance, nor would enchanted mice draw her thitherward in a pumpkin chariot. Tonight, all was prose.

It was after eight o'clock, and, save for the watchful Chloe, the young mistress sat alone. Mr. Ettrick had gone for a stroll ; the slaves had escaped bounds and had run up the road to flatten their black noses against the Knox window-panes, lured by the love of music and feasting ; while Peggy was left behind, with only her own thoughts for company.

It was a doleful moment, and the occasion was not brightened by the reading of a few stanzas from an old psalm book, whose preface gave the felicitous information that "*these songs are for godly solace, to the avoidance of profane ballads, which tendeth to the corruption of youth and the nourishing of vice.*"

The girl sighed. Somehow, these quaintly versified hymns failed to solace her, and as she read the words on a thumb-marked page, where another more spiritual than herself had found comfort, a sensation of absolute unbelief in such theology crept over her hitherto orthodox mind.

Conceived in sin, O wretched state !  
Before we draw our breath,  
The first young pulse begins to beat  
Iniquity and death.

To all that's good, averse and blind,  
But prone to all that's ill ;  
What dreadful darkness fills our mind !  
How obstinate our will !

How strong in our degenerate blood  
The old corruption reigns,  
And, mingling with the crooked flood,  
Wanders through all our veins !

Backward, with humble shame, we look  
On our original ;  
How is our nature dashed and broke  
In our first father's fall !

Again Peggy sighed, yet she felt no "degenerate" shame, and but little "crooked blood" circulating in her veins. In fact, her heart scarcely beat seventy to the minute. Presently, rising to her feet, she tossed the discomfiting book on the floor, and took in its place the handsome quarto volume that Captain Ford had given her, and closely scanned the page on which Paschal had written, while a thousand new thoughts crowded themselves upon her mind. The Frenchman had deceived her ; he might deceive Sallie. Would he deceive others ? Was he faithful to any one ? Was he loyal ? What had been the significance of his interrupted conversation with her father on the occasion of his first visit ? Could he be a traitor to Washington and the patriot cause ? A remembrance of the patriotism her mother had taught her long ago came suddenly between her and her erstwhile love for the stranger, —an insuperable barrier, —while Ford's honesty seemed


a bridge to carry her across a flood of trouble. She did not love the plain, unattractive Jonathan ; but she knew she could trust him, and there was comfort in the knowledge.

Angrily tearing the leaf which bore Paschal's lines from her album, ashamed lest they should be found there by the giver, she was suddenly startled by a knock at the door ; a low knock, yet one which asked admittance imperatively. She waited an instant for Chloe to run from the kitchen to admit the late guest, then, when no Chloe appeared, crossed the sanded hall herself, to find the Frenchman's handsome face peering at her in the darkness above the upper half of the door, which she had cautiously thrown back. She noticed his breathless manner and disordered dress as she granted him admission, yet her greeting was formal and her curtsy almost mocking in its graceful deliberation. It was the first face-to-face interview since the meeting in the glen, and, as is usually the case at such times, the woman showed far more composure than the man.

"Good-evening, sir," she said, with a rising inflection in her voice ; "to what am I indebted for the honor of a visit from you tonight? Have you mistaken the road to Mrs. Knox's house?"

"No, Mam'selle ; I had received no invitation to assist at the dance, and I do not greatly care," was the ready and untruthful answer ; "will you not permit that I have the pleasure of passing a quiet hour in your far more charming society?" Paschal either forgot or chose to ignore General Washington's letter to Peggy.

"Pray do not trouble to light the candles," the Frenchman said, as his hostess led him into the darkness of the parlor and began to twist up a taper that



she might light the six candles in the brass candelabra from the dying fire's blaze. Her hanging sleeve brushed against the dangling glass prisms of the old-fashioned ornamental branched candlestick, and the tinkling music, together with the sudden illumination, set all the guest's nerves vibrating.

"I dislike noise and glare," he said, irritably, when he found his wishes disregarded, then added, a trifle more amiably, "I love the quiet of your home, Mam'selle. It soothes me. I thank you for it." He bent down to touch his lips to her hand, perchance to take her slender wrist in his fingers once more, then hesitated ; for of what use is it to make love to a girl when it has already been made?

"I thank you, sir," Peggy answered distantly, imperceptibly drawing herself away from the man, under pretence of adjusting a fold in her gown. He noticed her manner, however, and sighed audibly.

"Have I the misfortune to offend you, Miss Et-trick?" he asked, presently ; "have I seemed negligent of our studies together? Surely, *mon ange*, you will pardon me ; is it not so? I have been much in attendance on His Excellency, and I have accompanied my people to the sacred dances, as you know. Is it that I have wrong, Mam'selle? Do you doubt me, *cherie*?"

"Oh, let us speak of something else," Margaret answered, a trifle less civilly than was the manner of this ceremonious age. "Tell me, is General Washington at the ball tonight?"

The Frenchman looked somewhat anxiously at the girl before he replied, then said, with an effort at non-chalance : "I know not ; but I heard it stated that the illness of Mrs. Washington would prevent his assisting."

"Oh, that is a pity! Every one longs to see him. I heard that Maria Colden would lead the minuet with him. What an honor for any girl! I must ride my pony into Newburgh tomorrow to hear the news, for you, sir, seem able to tell me nothing."

"Mam'selle," and here Paschal laid his hand on his heart with his usual graceful air of devotion, "how can I remember others when I have the felicity to be by your side?"

It was on the tip of Peggy's tongue to be a bit indiscreet just now, but, resisting the eminently feminine temptation to ask about Sallie, she said, slowly, "Perhaps you are weary; may I not offer you refreshments? My father is away, but one of the slaves will assist me in preparing a mint julep. We gathered mint in the glen, you remember, Monsieur; and it is fresh." This sly thrust was lost on the anxious guest, whose mind was preoccupied. It may be he had forgotten the mint-gathering episode, and the green stains on the hands he had so tenderly kissed; or else the necessities of the present hour drove all previous matters away from his overwrought brain. Margaret observed his absent manner, and a swift purpose, born of his treachery, came into her mind.

Despite his protestation that he needed neither food nor drink, his fair hostess left him to consult with faithful Chloe, who was found in her usual attitude of watchdog outside the parlor-door. Any one acquainted with negroes knows of their familiar leaning attitude; the slouching pose and half-sleepy manner, which suddenly awakens into life at a word of command from master or mistress.

"I wouldn't trus' him with a broken pitcher, honey. 'Pears like as if old Chloe mus' stan' by de do' and

gua'd. I stan' up to sleep, chile, but I watch." She gave Peggy a loving look, to which the half-hysterical girl responded with tears and laughter.

"Oh, mammy, help me, help me, if you really love me! I am afraid the Frenchman is not true to his promises. I—I—I do not care for myself——" here the fair face buried itself on the broad black bosom which would never betray its secrets. "But you will help me test him?"

"I'se ready, Miss Peggy; but you 'pears mons'ous cur'ous, an' act des like you's 'stracted."

"You know the wooden figure in the garret?" asked the girl; "the soldier sign?"

"I guess I does; I hid it myself under the flax."

"Yes, I remember. Now, I want you to go and get it and——"

"Yes, I remember how the massa swore at me——"

"Take it out in front of the house, and, after you have knocked on the door, get behind it. Knock on the door loudly, then crouch down behind it, and when I open the door, you call out like a man: '*Is there a British spy here?*'"

"What will he do, Missy?"

"I don't know. We will test him and find out."

"Yes, honey; but what will the massa say? I des skeered plumb outen my wits, dat I is."

"Oh, it is just a joke! My father won't mind. It is an old joke, too; one which was once played in Philadelphia. Father likes a joke——"

"I dunno, Missy; he doan't like the sight of the Yankee so'jer."

"Oh, hurry up, Chloe, and fetch it down from the garret," the mistress urged, yet there was but little merriment in the face she turned away from the servant.



"It was a shame for him to ask poor Sallie to meet him at the ball, and then come here, when she had sent all the way to New Paltz for her frock ! I declare I will find him out if he is a cheat," she soliloquized.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE

THE Frenchman sat many minutes where Margaret had left him, his anxious thoughts his only company. It had suited his present mood to call on one whose presence had hitherto soothed him, yet tonight's experience was distinctly disappointing. It was his farewell visit ; tomorrow's dawn would surely find him back in New York by the side of his beloved master, waiting the reward promised in those two whispered words. The remembrance of General Prescott awakened so many hopes and fears, that his mind travelled miles away from New Windsor, to return again with a sense of irritation.

What had changed Margaret Ettrick ? Louis Paschal believed himself to have had the best of opportunities to understand women, yet this country girl baffled him. He was sure of her love, for, while her raptures had hardly stirred his blood, he had not failed to note the trembling lines around her sweet red lips when they gathered mint together, and in his own fashion had loved and felt sorry for her. She was good, and he longed to make her his lasting friend. He believed in her thoroughly, and, although knowing her father's Tory sentiments, he had yet hesitated to make her a party to his baleful schemes.

The man was puzzled by Margaret's indifference. It was true he had neglected her, and he had expected her vanity would be piqued. He had rather counted on her reproaches, but had supposed a few kisses would adjust a lovers' quarrel. These methods of reasoning were primitive, yet they possessed the elements of the fairest dealing with women then known. It was give and take, and if Paschal felt any remorse, it rose from a peculiar respect for the girl with whom he was trifling. He had played a part, yet withal he liked Peggy Ettrick. He had sincerely wished her to marry Captain Ford, and regretted the inadvertence of his acquaintance, which had made such a union distasteful to her. He felt he had spoiled her life, without adding anything of value to his own. He liked her; yes, he even loved her; but not with the love she had asked. He could never marry her.

The short interval of silence gave opportunity for dreamy thoughts,—meditations of a tired man resting for a few minutes on a hard settle, on a night when he had the least occasion for rest. The silence was broken by the pretty hostess returning with a tray bearing glasses and a decanter.

"Please, how much sugar?" she said, as she put the silver waiter on a small mahogany stand by his side, and bent over the wine-glass into which she had poured some fragrant home-made cordial. There was a Majolica bowl on the table, into which she peeped as she asked this question, and from which she presently took a bit of loaf-sugar, "I fear I am stingy in sweetness," Miss Ettrick continued, with apparent affability, all her former hauteur gone. "Father takes so little sugar in his drinks, and the slaves get it only when they steal it."

"Mam'selle gives her sweetness in other ways," the

guest made haste to answer ; " she——" A loud knock at the door suddenly prevented the completion of the compliment.

" Who can it be ?" Margaret faltered. She was trembling with excitement, and the visitor, naturally, mistook her agitation for fear.

" Dear one," he whispered, drawing closer to her, " do not be afraid. I am with you." The girl, however, drew away and urgently said : " Please go to the door.\* Father is out ; the slaves have run off up the road to get a peep at Mrs. Knox's ball, and I—I am all alone. Hurry, hurry ! You are a man, and—surely you are not afraid ?"

Her words stung him, for the sound had disconcerted him, and with the timidity which is commonly thought to belong to the other sex, he was afraid. He rose to his feet and trembled. He did not attempt to explain the surprising inconsistency of his conduct ; but he was sure the whole plot was discovered ; he believed Captain Ford had shadowed him, and in his mind he cursed not only the girl's other and worthier lover, but the girl herself. Suddenly, she became hateful to him. She had fed him as Jael fed Sisera, and now the stars in their courses fought against him. He pushed her from him, noting, in spite of his fright, her unchanged color, and how her quiet manner contrasted with her imperative words.

The knocking was repeated, and there could be no question that some one outside was determined to make himself heard.

" Oh, what ails you, sir, that you will not go to the door ? Make haste, make haste, I say !" She gave him a push that shamed him into action. Long afterwards he remembered that his timid hostess gained

marvellously in courage at this moment, and followed him so quickly to the door that she seemed to tread on his heels in her haste. A voice from out the darkness greeted them as soon as the door was swung open, a voice which caused his very hair to rise with fear :

*"Is there a British spy here?"*

Paschal peered out into the black night to see the figure of an American soldier, standing, gun in hand, directly before the door. The light from the candle which Peggy held in her hand fell upon the figure's rigid face.

The Frenchman waited for no word of warning. He glanced for a single second at Peggy, to see if she would shelter him ; but when he found her as impassive as the American soldier he saw standing in front of the door, he darted out, at one side, and fled precipitately, leaving her to receive her new guest alone.


"Catch him, catch him, catch the British spy !" cried the voice, while a thousand mocking echoes took up the words. On, on, ran Paschal, ever hearing the cry of his pursuer, ever fearing capture ; thoroughly frightened, stumbling, falling, hurrying ; scarcely thinking whither his bewildered steps led him. Conscious that he was in danger, yet afraid to go forward or backward, he stopped for breath behind a large oak-tree, and while he waited a rider went by, whom he quickly recognized as Captain Ford. The horse shied, and in a moment Captain Ford identified the dim figure as Paschal. Had the Frenchman's nerve remained intact, he could have readily invented a story to explain his presence under the tree ; but being thoroughly convinced that the captain belonged to a scouting party who were hunting for him, he took refuge in another sudden flight, and was lost in the thicket before Ford

had fairly comprehended the situation. A moment later, the captain turned back and touched his spurs to his horse, determined to overtake the man whom he was sure had been out for no good purpose ; but it was too late. Paschal's figure was hidden in the darkness of the forest. Suddenly there darted through Ford's mind an association of ideas, and he connected the Frenchman's unusual behavior with the light he had seen some nights before, when travelling over this lonely road. There was no special reason why one circumstance should suggest the other ; there was no link between them, save that of locality, yet his wits were at work, and when he again urged his horse forward towards the Ettricks', the frown on his usually amiable face betokened no good to Louis Paschal.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### PEGGY AND YANKEE DOODLE

ANOTHER surprise awaited Captain Ford as he rode up to the Ettrick House. Chloe stood in the doorway, holding a candle in her hand, whose rays illuminated Peggy's girlish figure embracing a man who wore the uniform of an American soldier, while the fellow to whom this unusual privilege was granted remained quite immovable, as if his pulse were but little stirred by the ardent embrace. The captain, while hesitating to disclose himself as an unwelcome third, noticed that the man's attitude was surprisingly wooden, and, moreover, that he carried his gun in a manner better suited to a dress parade than a lover's abandon. Surely, this was a queer outdoor exhibition of affection, unless



the soldier were some long lost cousin unexpectedly returned from a distant camp.

While Jonathan Ford waited, irresolute as to what course delicacy should lead him to take in this novel situation, he heard the slave-woman chuckle noisily, and say, half reprovingly, "Leave go, honey; fo' shame, chile. Doan' you see 'at some one's comin'?"

"My dearest Yankee Doodle," cried Margaret, "must I kiss you good-by, my love?" With these unequivocal words she bestowed a good half-dozen sweet kisses on the wooden figure's face; then turned demurely to greet the astonished caller, who now, for the first time, discovered the trick his eyes had played him. The soldier-sign was painted on a thin board, both sides alike, and, but for the weather stains, an excellent representation of a real man.

"Pardon our confusion," Margaret said, hastily, determined to keep secret from grave Captain Ford the trick played on the Frenchman; "father is out for a walk, and Chloe and I were having some sport with this old figure which we call 'Yankee Doodle.' He has been my big doll since I was a child. Come in, please," leading the way across the hall into the parlor Paschal had so recently quitted.

The captain looked about him. He saw the wine-glasses and the decanter, the hymn-book lying face down on the floor, the Floral Album, his own gift, open on the centre-table, with one of its handsomest leaves torn out and crumpled. He recognized Paschal's fine handwriting upon the defaced page, but dared not stoop to read the lines. The situation was suggestive of much that was most distasteful, and a remembrance of the duel he was to fight for Miss Ettrick's honor did not improve matters.

"Father is out almost every evening lately," Peggy said, presently; "he does not tell me his plans, for he says that women do not understand business, and their place is by the fireside."

The man looked down on the bare floor in silence. He heard her words, yet found none of his own with which to answer. Mistaking his mood for one of coldness, Margaret abruptly changed the subject by asking: "Tell me of the ball tonight? Have you attended? Is it over so early?"

"Miss Ettrick," replied Ford, a trifle stifly, "I have good reason to believe you have already received another visitor this evening from Mrs. Knox's ball. Has not the Frenchman called upon you?"

Peggy only blushed in answer.

"Tell me," persisted Ford, his jealousy almost overmastered by the sweetness of the woman's downcast mien. "I believe in you, Margaret, and am ready to defend your honor with my life."

"I believe in you also, sir," she said, softly; but she moved away from the speaker. Evidently he had no mastery over her, although she trusted him.

"I did not come here to make love to you. This is no time to play a suitor's part. I will never again offend your ears with protestations of my affection. You know all I can tell you. I have long admired you, and long wished to make you my wife. If you cannot learn to love me, I will not seek to force your heart. Better far we should part, and I only ask God in His wisdom to grant you right judgment in your choice of a husband."

These were the rare old times when every woman found a husband, and the only question was the finding of a good one. To threaten a maid with possible sin-

gleness was unknown ; her worst enemies only pitied the husband who would be so unfortunate as to wed her. Hence, Captain Ford's somewhat stilted speech had a genuine ring, and as such Peggy received it.

"I thank you, sir," she said. She was no coquette. She was sure she did not wish to marry this man ; but his love was not altogether unacceptable. Love can warm a winter's day, and poor Peggy's days just now were chilly. She was fearful for her father's safety ; she doubted the Frenchman's loyalty ; she had given her love where it was not wanted, and, at last, these kind words came as a solace. Surely, love is love the world over, and there is nothing better in heaven above or on earth below. She did not need Captain Ford's love, she could not accept it ; but it was like an uncashed check. She felt the richer for it. It was like money in bank,—in a bank which would not break, a bank which would pay on demand. Almost was she won, although she knew it not.

"Will you tell me of your caller?" Ford asked, after a long pause, during which he had watched her most affectionately. "You are quite sure there is nothing wrong about this French teacher? Think before you answer me, for I rely on every word you speak. I am ready to stake my all on your truthfulness ; feeling as I do towards you, how could I do less?"

The man spoke urgently, and felt chagrined when Margaret turned her face to the window, and said : "I have nothing to say on the subject, Captain Ford." She thought the questioner a trifle masterful, yet would have forgiven him this trait,—said by novelists to be ever pardonable in women's eyes,—but feared to tell of her foolish trick with the soldier-sign. It might mean



a great deal, or nothing, and she hesitated to confess so grave a matter.

"Miss Margaret," the captain continued, more solemnly, the lines about his large mouth working painfully, "I do not wish to offend you, but you have allowed Louis Paschal an intimacy which others have remarked. I do not understand his actions. May I know if he was here this evening?"

There was a second's silence, then Peggy's angry words flashed out: "And if he were here, sir, I am in my father's house, and in my father's care, not yours——"

"If your father permits these visits at this late hour——"


"My father has nothing to do with it."

He noticed the girl's inconsistency, but he had done his duty, and it only remained to him to bow and withdraw.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### PASCHAL TELLS ANOTHER FISH STORY

THE resentment Captain Ford felt, as he rode back towards the Knox Headquarters, was not directed against the girl, who had treated him with such slight consideration, but, manlike, against the Frenchman. He thought the matter over, and, after due contemplation, decided he would ask permission to search the glen. So deep was his sense of injury, that he concluded to delay his duel with Major Belden, by use of well-known expedients, till such time as his suspicions had been allayed or confirmed. It was certain that



Louis Paschal stood between himself and Margaret Ettrick, and the thought of punishing him by ferreting out the secret was not a distasteful task. Could he have seen Paschal at that moment, while making these plans for the Frenchman's undoing, he would have seen a person already suffering intolerable agonies for things done and left undone. In point of fact, the Frenchman was lying prostrate with apprehensive fright in the distiller's cabin, whither his hurried steps had taken him after meeting the captain on the road.

"All is lost ! All is lost !" he cried, as he gave the triple knock agreed upon by the conspirators and gained admittance. "Give me a drop of whiskey ! *Ciel*, but I thirst."

"Faith, and I am after thinking you have had too much mountain-dew already, the night, my fine fellow. Sure, and why did you not bring the fair Mavourneen along wid ye to kape up your courage?" Pat answered, astonished at the man's dishevelled appearance and exhaustion. He gave him the desired "drop," however, with a result so revivifying that Paschal rose from the old lounge, on which he had thrown himself on entering, to say: "All is lost, Monsieur ! I run to save the others. There are soldiers on our track ; I have met one. I have no fear for myself, but I hasten to you to warn the others."

The wary distiller looked suspiciously and curiously at the speaker, then presently asked: "What do you propose to do about it?"

"Monsieur, I have done my possible. To save my friends, I run, I risk all ; for myself I do not care, but the others are brave men."

"It is right you are, *Mister Parlez-Vous*," Pat replied, not greatly alarmed, a grim sense of humor

illuminating the doleful situation ; "but the others are not waiting in my humble home to be saved. They are up at the mill this moment, waiting your signal. Will you leave them to wait for long? How are these things usually done in *Parree*? Will your red brothers lie in ambush? Speak out, man. Take some more drink and speak out."

"Monsieur, I know my own people," Paschal replied, accepting the offered whiskey, but drinking sparingly: "I will see them at once, and will have them ready another night."

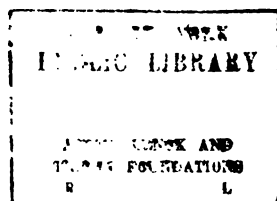
"Will another meeting be held here?" The Irishman was not satisfied with the explanation. He had risked exposure, on account of this kidnapping scheme, that for some reason, not clear to his befogged understanding, had fallen through ; he had waited ready to do his part ; he had certainly been liberal with his raw whiskey ; he had allowed the gentlemen to make free with his cabin, and they had learned many of his secrets, while he was none the richer. Thinking the matter over, he determined to force the situation, so he said with an oath : "By —, Mr. Frenchman, fix another meeting, and let us settle this matter up, or hellfire will be cool to the roasting I'll give the hull on ye."

"At noon, tomorrow," Louis answered, readily. He was rested and refreshed now, and ready as ever to promise anything. It seemed possible that at some other time circumstances might be more propitious. The remembrance of the pursuing soldier was fading from his volatile memory, and he left the cabin with a bow to his host which would have shamed a dancing-master.



HEADQUARTERS OF MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX

"A long, low roof projects over the little porch, under which it looks like an open left eye beneath a frowning brow."



## CHAPTER XXXIV

## PUNCH AND POLITICS

It is the pleasing fancy of the absent to imagine the agree of regret felt after their departure ; yet on the sight of the ball, as a matter of fact, neither Washington nor Ford was missed at all. If any one gave a half-minute's thought to the matter, which was improbable, since the gayety was all absorbing, the supposition was that they were in one of the upper rooms. Allie had let the captain's solemn words slip from her hiddy mind, as she was now being pleasantly entertained by Major Belden, who had invited her to row with him in the mill pond. It was a charming evening, and the two so far availed themselves of it as to push out beyond the hearing of those on shore. The group of officers on the rear porch, however, gathered about a punch bowl, used no such caution, although, in a way, the position they had chosen was somewhat secluded. Any one who visits "Knox's Headquarter's house" today, may see this corner piazza, which looks out upon the road ; for the house, in paradoxical fashion, faces the rear. A long, low roof projects over the little porch, under which it looks like an open left eye beneath a frowning brow. Here three men stood, chatting and drinking.

"A good many of those who are here," said General Knox, "want the meeting to be held in this house."

"That is a good idea ; why not ?"

"In my opinion, it is too public. Some one is apt to drop in almost any time. The General, himself, rides

over occasionally ; but why wouldn't your headquarters be better?" asked Knox of General Steuben.

"I have no objection," said the baron ; "but it is not so easily reached. It is nearly a mile across the Hudson, and then over a mile up the river, you know."

"Just the place on that account," remarked Tilghman ; "you will not be so apt to be interrupted ; but Knox doesn't think the Commander will consider it for a moment."

"I said," explained Knox, "that it would do no harm, as far as I could see, to test the matter. I am not opposed to trying."

"Congress does nothing about paying the troops," said Steuben ; "and as for the officers, I do not believe Congress ever intends to do anything."

"Five out of six agree with you," Tilghman answered ; "but how would making Washington 'King' help matters, even if he were willing?"

"He knows what the troops have done ; but down there, they don't seem to know or care," answered Steuben, bitterly ; "if he had the power he would see that the men received their back-pay. I will risk but that *he* would find a way."

"I am agreed to letting the matter be presented," said Knox ; "but I am so sure that the General will refuse the crown, that I think it would be best not to have our names appear."

"That will be well," replied Steuben. "Colonel Nicola, of the Reserve corps at Philadelphia, because of his personal relations with the Commander and his skill at writing, will be the best one to do the work."

"Is it agreed, then," said Knox, "that the meeting is to be over at the Verplanck House?"

"Yes."

"Then as many as possible should be notified tonight, so as to save the trouble of sending the word around later," put in Tilghman.

"When can it be held?"

"How would the twentieth do?" asked Steuben; "I shall be away for a few days, or it might be appointed earlier." The other two consenting, he added: "I will arrange matters at the house, if you will see that notice is given."

"That is all right," agreed Knox, "if you have allowed enough time for Nicola to get here."

It is a matter of the purest conjecture what more would have been said, had not a succession of interruptions now occurred. First a lady appeared at the door, and, seeing three gentlemen clearly avoiding their social duties, descended upon them with the disconcerting effect of a squadron of cavalry; albeit her menaces were only those appropriate to the person of the graceful hostess.

Who that is masculine has not noted the influence of a woman's presence? Too subtle to be caught and analyzed, too welcome to be evaded, the frost line of anxiety recedes before it, and the comparative unimportance of material affairs, regardless of the facts, becomes too apparent, when confronted with it, to admit of discussion. The source of this influence is not alone in the smile, although that is offered with more confidence and success than any argument; nor yet in the accompanying rustle of feminine apparel, which is near enough to the sound of angels' wings to satisfy the average man.

The three officers of the Continental army were but men, in the presence of Lucy Knox, and acknowledged that they were outranked as soon as she appeared.



"Oh, you skulkers!" she exclaimed, laughing. "Every one of you is a coward! I am ashamed of you!"

Surrender seemed to be the only method of escaping the penalty of her censure, which they all realized they deserved, and, without thought of resistance, they were upon the point of capitulating, when their attention was called to the pond by a bright light, which suddenly appeared and brilliantly illuminated the water and surrounding country. It revealed Major Belden and Sallie sitting in a small boat, near the centre of the pond; while upon a board, which floated on the water, some slow burning powder had been placed by them and ignited. Sallie waved her handkerchief and the major his hand to the group whose attention they had attracted, and soon the porch filled up with an outpouring of those who came to witness the pretty spectacle.

But now a startling cry was heard: prolonged; peremptory; fateful. It caused the merry-makers to look askance at each other, and silently await its repetition. Out on the pond, the major turned about in his seat, and, shading his eyes from the brilliant light with his hand, looked down towards the glen. Through the open windows the sound penetrated, and arrested the motions of the dancers, who assumed the appearance of chessmen upon a board, awaiting an unseen hand to give them back their former animation.

Captain Ford also heard the cry down the road, as he was returning from the Ettrick House. He reined his horse to a full stop to listen, while far into the glen it echoed and re-echoed, sending quickening impulses into the frame of the hesitating spy as the door of the distiller's cabin closed behind him.

The voice had come out of the darkness, and no spirit life could be more intangible ; yet it was instantly recognized as Washington's. Once more it came, forming a word which the same voice had often used in battle, when the only reply was the roar of artillery. It was not now the command to a battery to "fire," but the ever terrible and thrilling alarm and appeal of "Fire ! Fire !"

## CHAPTER XXXV

### AN UNEQUAL CONTEST

THE first person to respond to the alarm was Washington's body servant, the haughty and aristocratic Bill. The place of honor in the kitchen beside the low open fireplace had been his, where the genial surroundings and appetizing anticipations had made him condescend to receive and fondle the latest addition to the slave contingent. He was in the attitude of holding up the ~~pickanniny~~ pickanniny, to compare its features with a beaming and buxom wench standing before him fork in hand, arms akimbo, and surrounded with a group of fellow servants—who waited with deference the expected opinion—when the recognized voice of his master, at the first call, made him drop the baby on the hearth and dart out of the room.

As follows thunder upon lightning, so flew the large cooking-fork after the disappearing figure, accompanied by a burst of uncomplimentary expressions, in which the voice of the mother arose above the general din with : "Yo' ol' nigga !"

For a woman, the effort with the fork was something

phenomenal, since it proved a good "line shot," as an artilleryist would say, save that the "piece" was elevated a trifle too much, the tines of the fork having embedded themselves deep and fast in the frame over the door!

"Come here, William, and help me with the gate," said Washington, as his servant appeared near the mill.

"Yes, Massa George," and Bill followed the General to the heavy wooden water-gate, which was used to throw the water from the flume into the mill, where, after some delay and with considerable effort and noise, they succeeded in moving the long unused appliance.

"Our plan is a failure," whispered Ettrick to Colden, "and now is our chance to escape." Motioning the Indians to follow, they fled from the burning building down into the glen, where the latter sped on to join their companions, leaving the two Tories to make a wide circuit before joining the gathering spectators on the bank above.

It was not now, as earlier in the evening, that the lurking and suspicious eyes of Indians looked out from between the boards nailed over the windows; and yet what there appeared were living, moving forms, as malicious as demons from the pit, bent only upon evil. That which could be seen by the earliest arrivals resembled more the darting tongues of serpents thrust in and out between the boards,—a suggestion of monsters within to which they were attached. To the honest old mill, however, the undeserved assault upon its life was from what appeared to be a multitude of red-capped anarchists, who multiplied without procreation, ran without feet, and destroyed for the sake of destroying, without provocation or remorse. How the flames bowed and circled in their mad dance, which needed no music to give zest, or lead on to a passionate con-

summation. Interspersed with the merriment of the red-bedecked revelry was their work of breaking open the prison cells, wherever in board and beam the sun's heat had been so long imprisoned ; and as each tiny door yielded, with a crackling sound, out leapt the liberated flame to join its wanton rescuers.

The vines which had clambered laboriously up the exterior, peeped in the windows to see what was happening, then drew back, their leaves scorched and their whole graceful vitality shaken. The wind, the evil spirit of every fire, played havoc with their delicate tendrils, which hung downward as if suddenly struck with a blackening winter frost.

The fire spread and leaped higher and higher. Details of trees were revealed in silhouette against the lurid sky. The whole surrounding country was lighted up. The pink and saffron high-lights upon distant barns and house chimneys intensified the black velvet background of the night. The ever-increasing crowd of spectators eagerly watched the structure battling for its life. Even the black mammy, the catapult, was present, holding her uninjured offspring aloft, to clap its small hands at the big blaze.

Captain Ford had been the second to arrive, and soon pressed into service a line of men to pass pails of water from the flume. Pails, however, as usual in such emergencies, were in hiding, and the limited supply to be found proved inadequate for the purpose. It was like carrying water in a sieve to attempt to extinguish such a conflagration with a few bucketsful, although, by Washington's direction, they were thrown into the office, and slightly checked the flames at that point.

"There may be an explosion here soon," Washington said, "and we must scatter the folk at once."

A piercing cry was now heard, and all looked in the direction of the sound, towards the barn on an adjoining hill, and saw the Frenchman, standing close beside it, pointing excitedly at something on the flume near the pond. A glance sufficed to reveal poor Sallie in the boat, shooting down the flume itself with horrible rapidity. It seems that Major Belden, embarrassed by the predicament in which the fire had placed him, hastily decided to set his fair passenger ashore as best he could, at the head-gate of the flume. The choice was an unwise one. The rotten timbers broke under his weight and the result was disastrous. As he rose to the surface, from his involuntary bath, a sorry figure indeed, he caught the boat at the stern, but was helpless to prevent being dragged unwillingly down the flume towards the burning mill.

"The best place to stop the boat is where the water turns from the flume into the mill," said Washington to Ford, instantly recognizing the emergency. The latter needed no second suggestion, and, having the advantage of distance, was first at the spot. Others followed swiftly, but too late; they were not needed. First Sallie, none the worse for her adventure, but white and trembling, was lifted up to those who had gathered about, and then the hatless and soaking figure of Major Belden, who took one of Ford's hands in both of his and shook it gratefully.

"There will be no duel," remarked Major Tilghman to Steuben, and the latter acquiesced in the prediction with a smile of approval.

"If I had a barrel of powder here," said Knox to General Washington, "I could blow up the mill and stop the fire."

"It will blow up, I fear, and that without powder,"

replied Washington, and not stopping to explain the remark, he directed his lieutenants to warn every one to step back and entirely away from the mill.

Up on the hill, by the barn, Ettrick and Colden had joined the spy ; but the opportunity was too brief and the fancied danger from detection too great for more than one sentence: "Meet me tomorrow noon at the still." Without waiting for reply, Paschal broke away from them, and boldly advanced to meet Washington, whose manner on seeing him assured him of his safety.

The wind, which is always curious to pry into every door and window, is not always nor altogether innocent in its intentions, or at least it was not upon that night, for, from the more harmless occupation of rushing in and out, merely to blow the flames this way and that, —varying the excitement occasionally with a whirl that sent the sparks up into the overhanging trees,—it veered about and began blowing great clouds of burning cinders over on the adjoining barn.

To some of the on-lookers, it was merely a pretty spectacle of fireworks, among them the cook, who held up her baby and pointed to the beautiful sight. There were those, however, who thought of the horses and were beginning to move in their direction, when a heavy sound, as of distant thunder, was heard in the mill, and instantly the flames seemed blotted out with fresh masses of inky smoke that rolled out of every opening. In another moment the flames, in devouring and angry columns, pierced the smoke and soared through and above the roof timbers, to a great height, wonderfully increasing the dramatic effect of the scene. Before any one could recover from the surprise and admiration which this unexpected feature occasioned, other explosions were heard, with similar

effects, following in quick succession. Alas, the sick in the hospitals would never have those four barrels of spirits! The noise frightened the horses, hitched, country fashion, to the rail fences, and their loud neighing was added to the general excitement and confusion.

"Where is General Washington's horse?" asked Major Tilghman, of Bill; "I do not see him with the others."

"Massa George's hoss is safe in General Knox's own stall," the darkey replied.

"Then you must get him out, and that quickly," was Tilghman's prompt command; "see, the roof of the barn is blazing, and in a few minutes it will be too late."

"I reckon it's too late, now, Major," Bill said, the whites of his eyes rolling wildly; "*hosses* is such dumb fool critters; you can't coax 'em, nor lead 'em, nor whip 'em outen a burnin' buildin'. They has no sense in that, though I 'lows they beat men at most."

The news went about as quickly as the flames, and soon every one was advising, sympathizing, hindering, and helping. Bill knew the wisdom and foolishness of horses. Several men forced a way into the stall where the splendid creature stood, but neither whip nor voice was successful in the effort to lead him out of the burning building. He sniffed the air, he pawed the straw at his feet, he trembled, he choked with the smoke, he looked out of his large eyes at this one and at that, yet never stirred an inch.

Washington's horse, which had borne him on the battle-field, abroad and over quiet roads at home, was more than his servant; more than his companion; he was his friend. The flames came nearer and nearer, and the doom of death seemed close at hand.

"Are there no blankets?" some one in the crowd asked; "put one over his head and lead him out blind-folded."

The suggestion was timely, but blankets on this warm May evening seemed as scarce as buckets had proved a few minutes before.

"Take this." It was a woman this time who spoke, handing the man nearest her the small woollen shawl she had worn about her shoulders. The company turned to see Peggy Ettrick giving Paschal this impromptu blanket, and in another moment the General's fine horse with covered head was led safely out of the barn. In the rejoicing which followed this happy rescue, Margaret stepped back into the shadow, while the Commander, after warmly thanking the Frenchman for his services, informed him in an aside that the vault under the kitchen floor had proved to be as he had described.

"I wish you would ride back to Newburgh," he continued, "and let Mrs. Washington know the cause of my detention, and reassure her in case she is anxious at the delay. You have your horse here, I presume?"

Paschal looked about him in doubt. His horse stood waiting close by his side, and whinnied at his master's approach, and yet, how the animal came to be there at such an opportune moment, when left tied to a tree near Ettrick Grove, was a mystery. Peggy could have explained it easily enough, as she had herself ridden the animal from her own door hitherward at the first sight of the flames in the sky, but she said nothing. It had proved an eventful evening for her, but she was compensated for the earlier disappointment by Washington's thoughtful offer to have his servant Bill take



her home behind him on his own horse. There was one thing, however, that she could not quite understand ; on which she pondered all the way home. She had overheard Captain Ford secure permission from Washington to take some men and search the glen on the following day. "Why should he wish to do that?" she asked herself.

The old clock on the stairs struck one before the last of the dancers returned to the house, and while Mrs. Knox's belated but appetizing refreshments were duly served and enjoyed, there remained but slight inclination to resume the dancing.

Emboldened by the retreat of the spectators, the shadows gathered about the smouldering ruins of the mill and barn to accomplish their work of extinguishing the fire. Many a time were they driven back by the temporary bursting forth of flames ; but as often did they return undaunted to the contest. At last, the shadows held undisputed possession of the field where had been waged the mimic conflict of darkness with light.

May the true conditions of this universal conflict, however, be ever fairly judged from observations taken in the night ?

#### AFTER NIGHT COMETH DAY.

*What is the night to me ?*

It summons forebodings and gloom,  
It peoples with phantoms my room,  
With visitors, dumb, from the tomb.  
Despondent, I wait for the light  
To lend me the courage of sight  
And banish the thoughts which affright.

*What is the sun to me ?*

It rises ; the mist disappears ;  
It drives away shadows and fears,  
And lightens my burden of years.  
It shames me for cherishing doubt,  
It puts indecision to rout,  
And changes my sigh to a shout.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### ECHOES FROM THE BALL

"LA, my dear !" Maria Colden said to her bedfellow, Sallie Jansen, as the two rested their heavily dressed heads on the same long bolster, just as dawn peeped through the eastern windows upon them after the many events of the never-to-be-forgotten ball : "I pitied you from my heart ; I did, indeed ! I know your sensibility, love, and to be forsaken by your sweetheart was bad enough, without being almost drowned in the mill-pond by that red-faced Major Belden."

Sallie gave a start at Maria's first allusion to Paschal, whose absence from the dance had both piqued and puzzled her, till the words concerning her adventure in the boat made a welcome diversion.

"Pray do not be disturbed," she answered, holding her much befrizzled head as carefully as the feather bolster permitted ; "the major has a good heart ; and, you know, I was gallantly rescued by Captain Ford, with whom it is understood he is shortly to fight a duel." The words escaped Sallie before she thought, and her companion took them up quickly.

"A duel ? Is Major Belden to fight a duel with

Captain Ford? About what? Surely, not about you?" Maria's blue eyes were wide open, now, for this was news, indeed.

"Hush, my dear, have done! I have said my prayers and am sleepy." Sallie was getting her in-ning at last. She had surprised Maria.

"Good-night, love," Maria responded, much vexed: "I will pray that God will give you patience and resignation."

To this there was no response, and presently the dear friends were sweetly sleeping side by side, their rivalry forgotten in dreamland.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the old Hasbrouck House, behind other bed curtains, a conversation, scarcely more amiable, was being carried on. It was indeed rather a monologue than dialogue, and we owe it to the indiscretion of the eavesdropping housekeeper, Mrs. Hamilton, that history has preserved the record.

"I think you stopped very late at the ball." This from Mrs. Washington, of course.

No answer from the General.

"I know there was a fire, but I understand that it occurred early in the evening. I should think you would have returned immediately after."

Yet no answer.

"You knew I was quite indisposed."

Continued silence.

"Yes, indeed; yet you stayed to dance with that little coquette, Mrs. Lucy Knox——"

"My dear!" Washington's tone was a trifle stern.

"It is true! You cannot deny it! You admire her! Everybody notices the way she invites your attention with her daring black eyes."

"Martha, the wife of General Knox should not be made the subject of idle gossip."

"It is true. She fancies all the gentlemen admire her."

"*Martha!*" This in a voice only insubordinate soldiers ever heard from the Commander-in-Chief.

"I don't care." (Sobs.) "It is what people say." (Sobs increasing.) "I think she is an arrant flirt! She married a bookseller in Boston. She never saw any society at all, and yet—all the men run after her like a flock of—of——"

"There—that is *enough* for tonight. Go to sleep, my dear," said Washington in so decided a manner that she did not care to longer disregard his wishes.

Nothing more was heard, and sleep settled down at last over the Newburgh world.

Mrs. Knox's ball was over.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### MR. ETTRICK MAKES A SUGGESTION

JONATHAN FORD was puzzled. Although morning is said to be wiser than evening, the following day threw no light upon the mysteries of the previous night. The more the sensible, unromantic captain reflected upon the Frenchman's conduct, the less was he able to comprehend the meaning of any part of it. He had all the pieces of the puzzle, without the ability to put them together. His surveillance over this troublesome fellow was at an end, nevertheless it gave him a distinct sense of pleasure to obtain permission from General Wash-

ington to search the glen. He was sure the man he hated, the man whom Peggy loved, was associated in some mysterious way with this locality, and he hoped with the aid of a detail of soldiers to hunt him down. "Plain John" scowled. His thoughts were travelling into deeper tangles than those of the ravine. He was wondering what possible connection Margaret Ettrick might have with Louis Paschal's secrets. Did she share them? Could they be worthy of finding shelter in her pure breast? Was it possible for a good woman to love a bad man? Ah, Captain Ford! The close of the nineteenth century has not answered this last question, which you vainly asked so long ago.

The troubled thinker turned towards the stables that were located on the southern side of the farm, a short distance from the house, to direct a servant to bring him his horse in an hour's time; then, as he went to detail the men who were to accompany him, he met Paschal face to face, just as the latter crossed the stubble field between the headquarters and the river.

"Good-morning, sir," said the Frenchman, with a salute that was most formal; "the day bids well to be fair; may I have the honor to wish you a happy promenade on the horse?"

The absurdity of the idiom used irritated Ford, who firmly believed foreigners mispronounced and generally upset the English language merely to confuse the untravelled. He saw, moreover, that the man was ostensibly busy about nothing, as if to divert attention from last night's meeting by the tree. Hesitating how to open the attack, the captain shuffled his big feet clumsily on the ground, while the nimble Paschal, in the graceful attitude of an Arcadian shepherd, leaned easily against a gnarled old apple-tree. There was a

moment's silence between the two ; then, as if with one impulse, each glanced at a sail on the river.

"The ferry is coming in early," Ford remarked, as he watched the white winged vessel tacking for the Newburgh shore.

"Pardon, Monsieur," responded the other, whose better trained eye detected something unusual in this boat's rigging, "the ferry-boat is of an oblong shape, as doubtless Monsieur has observed." He turned away, leaving Captain Ford in a state of mind bordering on admiration for the young fellow's cleverness, mingled with increasing irritation.

Utterly ignorant of the captain's intention to examine the glen, the Frenchman, now not over eager to meet his companions, set out to reach the appointed rendezvous for the mid-day meeting, and arrived only a trifle later than the others.

"You are a *great* fellow, *you* are," was Colden's satirical greeting.

"Gentlemen," replied the suave Frenchman, who was, again, in full control of himself, and perfectly certain that his statements were beyond all possibility of contradiction ; "my delay of last evening was unavoidable. I beg you to pardon me. I went some distance into the country to obtain supplies. I acted under the directions of General Washington. It was for his household, gentlemen. I was detained. It is not I who have set fire to the mill. If it had not burned, all would have been well. There was then confusion ; there was a *mêlée* ; it was past the appointed hour. The Indians had dispersed. The red men saw the flames in the heavens and believed them evil omens. My friends, ask not me, but the good God, why our plans failed. Ask not me, messieurs ! Is it I who

order the heavens and the earth?" he raised his clear gray eyes piously to the cloudless sky and sighed.

The fisherman stepped back inside the cabin to hide a smile at the story, which differed in every particular from the one Paschal had related the previous evening when he had sought refuge in his frightened flight, and was deliberating what he should say if questioned by the others, when this matter was decided for him by the Frenchman himself. It was decided, like many another weighty question, by the weight of gold. The spy, coming softly behind Pat, thrust something into his hand. The pledge of silence was wordless, yet all sufficient.

The Tories exchanged glances at what they had heard, as they followed Paschal into the cabin.

"Ah, messieurs, you believe me not?" Again Paschal sighed. He suffered keenly from the men's prolonged stare. He felt their cruel eyes travelling from his face downwards, button by button, seam by seam, from one fold in his clothing to another, till at length they rested on his little feet as he dangled them from the table on which he sat.

"I don't," said Ettrick, bluntly.

"No more do I?" scoffed Colden, his big, red wig shaking with his suppressed wrath, as he added, "and why we were such fools as to trust to a boy like yourself, I don't know."

"Suppose you take another leader," Ettrick said, on a sudden impulse. "I risk more than you all, and have my all at stake. I promise you not to be missing at the critical moment, 'carrying messages into the country for General Washington.' I am not attempting to serve two masters, neither am I young and careless, like this boy, whose blunder last night lost us our

prize. Had he been ready, we would have been successful. No matter, I have another plan."

"Pray, what is it?" all asked together. Paschal was smarting under the scathing reprimand he had received, yet tactfully threw his whole soul into the next thing that presented itself, and at this juncture drew close to the speaker as if eager to serve him in every possible way.

"It is just this," Mr. Ettrick responded, promptly: "I will give a dinner and invite General Washington——"

"Invite Washington to dinner!" said Colden, in surprise.

"Yes, why not?"

"But will he come?"

"I will have my daughter Margaret take the invitation, and he will not refuse her. No one can; besides, I hear that Mrs. Washington did not approve of sending those soldiers here to rob me. This will show that I bear him no ill will on that account. 'Hot coals,' you know," Ettrick added, laughing at his own sagacity. "Paschal should be able also to do something at that end of the line."

"He'll come," said the Frenchman, nodding; "but what is your plan?"

"The Indians must be ready as before, and come forward at a given signal, to surround the house; capture, bind, and carry him down the creek in their canoes. It is all simple enough. We ourselves, in my house, must boldly cover him with our pistols—Paschal and I—and prevent his resisting. What do you think of it, Colden? Will you help? And you, little *Monseer*?"

Paschal, delighted to reinstate himself in the favor of these men whom he had disappointed, lost no time in



elaborately expressing his satisfaction with the plan. Mr. Colden, also, approved. The dinner was not to be at his house, hence he might share the glory without the possible responsibility of defeat.

"We must wait a few days, to prevent any possible suspicion," Ettrick said, thoughtfully ; "then the matter is simple enough. There is no need of mystery ; only, of course, we must keep our own counsel. Are you all agreed ?"

"Agreed," was the unanimous response.

"Twelve men to one,—that is the argument,—and be quick about it. It is one thing to order men to shoot some one else, but quite another to stand up and be shot yourself. The people's hero will hardly care to look down our pistol barrels, I fancy ; eh, what say ?" This last was addressed to Mr. Jansen, who had hitherto kept silent. Sallie's adventure in the boat the night before, together with her unusual reticence, had greatly disturbed him. He began to feel that he had no business meddling further in this matter. The remark about General Washington's probable lack of courage in the presence of danger stirred him strangely, and caused an involuntary exclamation of dissent.

"Eh, what say ?" Colden repeated, with evident surprise.

"I have heard on good authority," Jansen answered, courteously, "that people blame their hero rather for his courage than for his lack of it. It was said at Trenton that his men feared to lose a leader so reckless of himself when danger was greatest."

"My proposition does not embrace a battle-field, but a dinner-table," Ettrick said, impatiently ; "so, perhaps, we may overcome these foolhardy tendencies of which you speak."

"I will keep the Indians hid up the glen, as before," Paschal said, with great alacrity.

"And keep yourself as quietly as may be at the Hasbrouck House," Ettrick responded, adding with a sneer, "except when you are obliged to be absent to give the young ladies lessons in——" he made a significant and disagreeably suggestive pause, then finished with the word, "French."

"Certainly, sir, certainly. *Ma foi*, but you are an angel."

"Not soon, I hope," was the quick retort; "I am not ready to be measured for wings quite yet; eh, Colden?"

There being no division of opinion on this matter, the company decided to drink once more to the success of their scheme. Jansen summoned the distiller, and by a well-known pantomime, consisting of raising an imaginary bottle to his lips, succeeded in getting the much-needed liquor. The pantomime, however, was so well done, that it almost seemed as if the actor might be enjoying the delights of the liquor, without the ill effects; as smokers are said to imagine themselves smoking unlighted pipes in the dark.

Who has not noticed at a gathering of men the interesting general effect of high spirits poured upon low spirits? Each member of the party was stimulated to exhibit his own special proclivity, and Colden soon began to sing, somewhat unsteadily, "God save the King!"

"Hush, will you," protested Ettrick, notwithstanding that he had been earnestly asserting that he "was a man," and would fight any one who said he was not. "I'm a man, I tell you, and it isn't necessary for God to save the King. I'll do it myself." So potent was

Pat's whiskey, that at this moment Jansen suddenly broke forth into a song, the words of which, being in low Dutch, sounded only like some weird gibberish. They were the words of a doggerel, often heard by him, describing the flight of the women and children to Hurley when Kingston was burned by the British.

Loop, jongens, loop, de Rooje  
Komme. Span de paerde  
Voor de wagen, en rÿ naer  
Hurley toe.

All turned upon the exhilarated Dutchman, bidding him be quiet, when a new diversion caused every lesser one to be set aside, and exerted a decidedly sobering influence :

"Father ! Father !" cried a woman's voice, "save yourself ! The soldiers are coming. Save yourself !" The words were accompanied by a hurried knock, and when Paschal, who stood nearest the door, cautiously opened it, Peggy, bareheaded and breathless, fell forward into the room and sank upon the floor.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE BLACKSMITH TIGHTENS A SHOE

THE celerity with which the Frenchman had left the headquarters that morning saved him from unwelcome companions, for, although his departure was observed by Captain Ford, the latter's work of preparation to follow could not be unduly hastened ; hence some minutes elapsed before the company of well-armed horsemen accompanied their leader southward. Paschal,

meanwhile, having gained a long start, was safely hidden in the distiller's cabin, making his excuses to the Tories and listening in turn to the new plan for the kidnapping, before Ford and his men had reached the forge near the Ettrick House.

Peeping through a crack in her wooden window shutters, Peggy saw the detail of soldiers and heard the captain's voice. Chloe, too, as she leaned on the gate, put her curiosity to good purpose.

"Have you seen Mr. Ettrick about this morning?" was the first question the captain asked of the smith. Ford was so astonished not to find Paschal's horse hitched to the fence, that he might have asked if the moon were made of green cheese, for all interest he had in the answer to be given. He wanted to conceal the reason of his halt, and said the most likely thing that occurred to him on the spur of the moment.

"He went up the glen, fishing, an hour ago," replied the blacksmith, obligingly dropping the foot of the horse he was shoeing, and coming out into the sunshine to point the direction. "He is powerful fond of fishing," he added. "I see him go into the glen reg'lar, morning and evening."

"Fish bite in the dark?" one of the soldiers asked, with a laugh.

"Is there any road running in?" questioned Captain Ford. It is odd how people like to joke before a silent man, as if fun needs a grave background upon which to scintillate. Ford's men all liked him, but none could resist the temptation to be merry at his expense, or at the expense of any one with whom he was seriously conversing.

"You're a stranger in these parts, I see," said the smith. "Murderer's Creek is not a likely place any-

where, and its roads, if it has any, which I doubt, don't lead to no good. Better leave your horse, which I see is a rare, fine animal, with me or near the bridge, in charge of one of your men,—better leave all the horses and go up by a footpath."

Thanking the blacksmith for his information, the party was moving on to obey him, when the man's keen eye noticed that one of Ford's horse's shoes was loose.

"I can tighten it in a jiffy," the smith said, with professional pride, picking up the foot. "See, it rattles." In vain the captain fretted over the delay; needs must, and he dismounted with what show of composure he could muster, to submit to the inevitable.

Peggy was now roused from her pose of Juliet in the window by a fierce tugging of her skirts from within, which came from Chloe's energetic hand. "Oh, Missy," she said, with all the excitability of her race; "yo' po' fader! Oh, the massa! The sojers are goin' into the glen! I knows what yo' doan' know, Missy. Things is done in the glen, Missy—at the cabin—things as isn't right, an' he will be killed an'——" Here the alarming words were interrupted by sobs, and the young mistress forgot her own troubles in attempting to comfort her faithful slave.

"Hush, hush, mammy," she said, throwing her white arms about the black woman, and pressing her pink cheek against the dusky one of the negress; "I know a short cut, and I will run ahead and warn my father, before the soldiers reach the cabin. I can find it easily enough."

"Ain't you afeard, Missy?"

"No, indeed; if worse comes to worst, I can trust to Captain Ford to protect me." A blush of pride

covered the girl's face as she said this, but Chloe harbored no such romantic expectations.

"I doan' know, Missy ; you all'us treats him drefful cruel."

"He is a gentleman, Chloe, and I trust to his honor."

"I thinks gem'men is just men, honey."

"I can't stop to talk ;" this quite impatiently, pulling herself away from the woman's embrace without more parley ; and in another moment she was off with all the fleetness of a swallow. Using a little-known short cut, she hurried into the thicket at the rear of the house, determined to reach the still before Ford or any of his men could arrive, her apprehension increasing with each step. The spy's strange behavior, her father's frequent absences, his walks with his fishing-rod, early and late,—all pointed mysteriously to some plot, and, with a woman's instinct, she guessed that more was at stake than was evident. That there was an illicit still in the glen was an open secret at their house, yet the girl saw no reason why a squad of soldiers should be sent to examine it.

It is a curious phenomenon, that in a time of great mental excitement, such as most of us have experienced, some trivial thing, apparently dissociated with the disturbing subject, will sometimes take possession of one's mind. Whether it was due to some secret association of ideas, or to the occult influence of her surroundings, there flashed into Peggy's consciousness the sudden remembrance of the verses which the Frenchman had written in her album, and with them a sense of the eloquent "voices" of the deep and solemn woods about her. She found the tap, tap, tap of her hastening feet unconsciously keeping time with the measure of the musical lines :

Ecoute au fond des bois  
Murmurer une voix :  
Rappelle-toi.

Ecoute, dans la nuit,  
Une voix qui gémit :  
Rappelle-toi.

Tant que mon cœur battra,  
Toujours il te dira :  
Rappelle-toi.

On, on, Margaret ran, without shawl or sunbonnet, the fresh spring breezes tossing her neatly plaited hair and teasingly robbing her of her quaint mob cap ; the tangled twigs and budding branches catching at her scanty skirts and making such dire rents as would take whole days of patient mending to repair ; the sharp stones scratching her coarse shoes ; the long grasses tickling her home-knit stockings ; on, on, out of breath but full of courage, desperate in her haste but never faltering in her purpose. Once she fell full length on the damp ground, crushing half a hundred pink arbutus blossoms by her weight, then, regaining her feet, she stumbled yet a second time in crossing the ravine, getting a thorough wetting in the swollen spring torrent. In her mad, blind haste, she hit her shoulder upon a projecting rock, and in recovering her balance burst from her tight bodice half the tiny hooks which held it in place about her full, well-developed figure.

Regardless of appearances, where there was none to spy save passing bird or bee, she held her bedraggled draperies together as best she could, never resting till she stood, breathless and faint with exhaustion, before the fast-closed cabin door. Her plight was not less extreme than the Frenchman's of the preceding evening ;

a better conscience adding nothing to the lung power of this far more innocent runner. The commonplace appearance of the cabin was reassuring. The inverted washtub outside the door looked too domestic for a tragedy ; the ragged blankets strung along the knotty branches of the fir-trees made her almost doubt the necessity of giving an alarm. She noticed these details, despite her fear and haste. It was a lonesome spot, one she had rarely visited ; yet fear for herself was shortly swallowed up in remembrance of the searching party, whose voices she thought she heard close by. Then it was she cried, "Father ! Father ! Save yourself ! The soldiers are coming ! Save yourself !" and fell with all her weight on the cabin floor.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### STRATEGY

BEFORE the consternation caused by Peggy's abrupt entrance and equally abrupt fainting had died away ; before her words had become fairly intelligible to the assembled company ; the distiller, peeping through the shutter, cried out in dismay : "We are discovered. The soldiers are upon us." Recovering his nerve a second later, he said, hurriedly pointing to the inner chamber : "This way, gentlemen ; but remember, Pat gets well paid for his help, for it's an honest livelihood ; he is after losing by the blamed likes of ye this day. Sure an' its meself I have hidden afore, wid me wash hangin' on the tree to fool the boys."

The astonished men gladly followed their rather ungracious host into the cave at the rear, whose existence



had been altogether unknown to them hitherto, only Paschal and Ettrick remaining behind, to look helplessly at Margaret's still prostrate figure, as it lay stretched on the dirty floor. Ettrick had hurriedly explained that Margaret inherited from her mother a tendency to faint under strong excitement, and that the best thing to do was to lay her down flat and leave her alone.

"We ought to put her on the lounge," the father said, stooping to lift her heavy head and motioning to the Frenchman to take hold of her muddy feet.

On the stage and in romance, the feet of heroines play no awkward part in a swoon, but, as a matter of fact, these pedal extremities presented to the inexperienced assistant a most formidable appearance. Paschal looked at Peggy's shoes in despair. If he lifted her up by them, what reason had he for thinking the support of her father's rather shaking hands at her head would be sufficient to raise the whole dead weight of her loveliness? Something like the feeling of the amateur, who refuses to take the new baby lest its head fall off, made him hesitate. Perhaps the girl would break in two at her waist line if clumsily picked up from the floor.

"Why should we disturb her, Monsieur?" he said, the idea of saving himself at the expense of the girl's reputation suddenly presenting itself to his mind. "Hide, and I will remain by her side. We are known to be sweethearts. See! I throw open the shutter a little—so—and if the soldiers come to search, they will find us together, and ride away confessing themselves fools for their pains. They will find no traitors, nothing at all but two lovers. Have I right? Here, we raise the Mam'selle to the couch;" this was done easily enough, and without arousing the swooning girl.

"Hide yourself with the others," Paschal repeated, "I beg of you. Hide, hide, they are upon us!"

"I leave my child with you," Ettrick said, all haste to be away; "I am sure you are a man of honor." His stilted speech was broken off suddenly, for outside the voices of the searching party were distinctly heard, and in a moment Paschal was alone with the woman who had told him she loved him. Alone, and she unconscious!

No sooner had Ettrick disappeared into the dark recesses of the cave, than the Frenchman, as good as his word, or as bad, proceeded with much glad alacrity to carry out the plan he had hurriedly formed. Louis Paschal was a born actor, and it was not difficult for him to assume a *rôle* on short notice.

"I have heard about this infernal rat-trap," Captain Ford declared, in a voice which seemed to issue from a person standing close outside the cabin window.

"There is a deal of bad whiskey sold in camp," said one of the soldiers, "and, from the looks of it, may have been made here.

"Stop talking there!" ordered the leader, sternly. "You two," selecting the men, "remain here and guard this side; you two go round and get on the other side of the house; step lively; three watch the back, and the rest come with me."

Just then, the distiller came out of the door with a basket of clothes that he began to hang on the line.

"What have you got there?" asked Ford.

"Where?" asked the distiller, innocently.

"There," pointing to the cabin.

"Go in and see for y'rselves, gentlemen," the Irishman leered. He knew that the sight of Paschal and Miss Ettrick together would so distract Captain Ford's

mind, that all thought of an illicit still would be abandoned. He proceeded with his work at the clothes-lines, while Ford stepped promptly towards the door, hesitated, and passed on to the window.

The shutter was open wide enough to disclose to the man without the man within bending over Margaret's prostrate form. Paschal's hand, hidden under the folds of the girl's disordered bodice, was laid upon her heart to note its beating, that he might be warned of her first return to consciousness. Her sweet face, turned from the window, rested on the dirty pillow ; while the spy's dark, handsome head was bent so near that his brow touched her fair hair.

Poor John Ford ! He might live a hundred years and never be able to forget this picture. Here was no meeting place of plotters ; it was only a rendezvous for lovers. Here was an end of Jonathan Ford's belief in womankind. The end ! He was hesitating whether it were not best to make a finish, also, of Paschal himself ; to send his soul to hell, and follow it if need be, when he heard the Irishman's hateful chuckle close at his side.

"By the howly Mither, Captain," he said, peering over Ford's shoulder with a diabolical grin on his loosely hanging lips, "do you mind the loikes of the two of them in my house ? As decent a shanty, by St. Joseph's blood, as iver gave shelter to homely bodies sich as my wife and me ! Faith, an' the fine gintleman comes here a leetle too often I am afeard. I—what are you after saying, sir ?"

"I said nothing," replied Ford, pale with rage, and stung to the quick by insinuations he could not misunderstand.

"I dread her father, Captain, and I can't afford to

lose the free rent of the roof here by turning telltale. I am not set to spy on the girl."

The distiller's innuendoes fell upon ears which would fain have grown deaf rather than hear them. Ford tried not to listen. He wished his eyes had lost their sight, before they had told him this tale of Margaret's unworthiness. He stood like one in a dream, trying to remember what had become of the love and respect he had felt for this woman an hour—a half hour—five minutes—ago. Together, faith and love had vanished, as he believed never more to return. His infatuation was a thing of the faraway past ; utterly and completely gone. Margaret Ettrick no longer existed for him ; more than that—she had never existed, save in his own foolish imagination.

Summoning his men and making short work of his orders, the searching party started back, satisfied that the place, after all, was merely a fisherman's cabin ; or if any in the company doubted, they believed their leader had sufficient reason for abandoning the enterprise. Ford on his part felt nothing but mortification. He had absolutely a blank report to give General Washington, for how could he tell him that he had found the suspected shanty to be nothing worse or better than a meeting place of lovers ?

## CHAPTER XL

## MARGARET MAKES A DISCOVERY

It may have been ten minutes later, less or more—since in fainting spells as in sleep one loses all account of time—that Peggy awoke to hear the sound of men's voices near her. She opened her eyes drowsily; a weak smile played on her lips; a slight confusion troubled her. Somehow she had lost her reckoning and knew it, without being able to set herself straight. She was doubtful whether certain things happened a week ago, or that morning. She did not know whether it were mid-day or evening. She began to wonder vaguely about the day of the month, although, in a non-letter-writing age, one rarely troubled oneself on a subject now of such vast importance. In a word, the girl's perspective had gone astray. The brain pressure consequent on her exhaustion had been more complete than is usual in a common case of syncope, and the returning to complete consciousness was slow and painful. Her mind, as well as her body, had been asleep. She had been away,—somewhere, she knew not where,—and no physician then or now could have told her. Memory was silent. If she had been conscious of dreams, they were blotted out on her awakening.

She gradually became aware of the droning sound of conversation near her. At first it meant no more to her than the humming of bees, but suddenly, with all its significance, the following remark struck full upon her consciousness :

"It is agreed then, gentlemen. I will invite him to my house, as I was saying when we were interrupted. I will tell him that it is my daughter's birthday, and he will consider it an informal occasion, and will consent to come on short notice. I will send Margaret to deliver the invitation herself, as she has a dignity of her own that will not betray us. I am sorry that we must wait, but if the General is to be away for a few days, it cannot be helped."

A sense of impending evil, in which she was to be involved, made Margaret remain quiet, to hear what should follow.

"It is well planned," this from Colden. "I am sure Miss Margaret will do her part with honor."

"And you will not fail to be present?" Ettrick turned to Paschal.

"I will assist at your dinner with pleasure," was the humble reply. He knew they had reason to doubt him.

"I know you will be glad to see my daughter," said Ettrick, with a shade of sarcasm in his tone. "I have been somewhat stern with her of late. She is much alone, and needs cheerful society; but a parent must be ever watchful."

Knowing just how watchful this same parent had been a little while before, when he left his child and hid himself in the cave, the Frenchman turned away his face to hide a smile he could not repress, and in so doing saw the girl make a movement on the sofa.

"Hush!" he said, warningly; "she is waking." His caution was a second too late: Colden questioned if the force of men were large enough to take Washington prisoner. It was the first time that Margaret had heard the name mentioned. The conspirators hastily separated,

leaving Ettrick to await his daughter's complete restoration. She lay perfectly still, and no one supposed a single word had reached her ears. The Frenchman, watching her, believed he had been mistaken in thinking she had moved, for her attitude continued the same for many minutes.

Margaret Ettrick, however, by this time, was awake and wide awake. She knew absolutely nothing of what had happened from the second she fell fainting on the floor till she heard her father's voice ; but every fraction of time since then was clear to her. The words she had overheard had burned themselves into her brain. It was incredible that her father should be plotting to kidnap Washington, who had always seemed to her the veritable personification of American liberty. He was not America's king ; yet the old command, "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm," held sway over her mind, despite her father. No one had taught the girl this reverence ; it was in the air she breathed. She really thought as other patriots thought, and was distressed that her father was of another mind. She knew his embittered nature ; she was aware that he was called a Tory ; but that he should touch God's anointed—as she believed Washington to be—was a revelation she could hardly understand. Oh, it was too dreadful ! It could not be ; it must not be ! She had not saved her father's life for this.

Margaret's impressions upon meeting him at the fire the previous evening, as well as upon several former occasions, only increased her admiration for one who seemed in every way worthy to be considered a hero. Moreover, the girl had caught pleasant glimpses of Mrs. Washington, at work in her garden on the old Hasbrouck farm. Margaret sometimes stopped her pony,

when riding by, that she might daringly peep under the apple-tree branches, and see this stately lady actually weeding her tulip bed with her own white hands. And it was to widow this good woman, this faithful wife, that these conspirators had schemed to capture General Washington !

This was a homely, nearby view to take of what would be a national disaster ; but it is truly said that women best love and understand things which are near. Margaret may have been short-sighted upon some subjects, but she was surely clear-eyed now. All these fancies passed rapidly through her mind and revealed two hitherto unrecognized facts to her consciousness. She knew herself to be a patriot, and realized that Captain Ford's attentions would never again be entirely disagreeable and unattractive to her, because he too was a patriot, and with him she would not feel herself absolutely alone. Surely, strange is Fate ! She remembered his last words,—not his expressed love for her, but his belief in her ; for which she had sincerely thanked him ; and as she steeled her courage to resist her father's well-laid plans for the dinner, she felt sure that Jonathan Ford would prove himself her trusted ally in the coming emergency.

"Do you feel better, my dear ?" she now heard Mr. Ettrick say softly in her ear. She sat up and looked about her. Her torn and disordered dress disturbed her. She was yet weak and nervous, and trembled when she tried to stand. The room was close ; there was a horrid smell of whiskey, of stale tobacco, of dirt everywhere, and, in spite of her physical inability, she made a supreme effort to follow her father home. Neither spoke. In each heart there was an unshared weight of care, and in the same unbroken silence they



sat down opposite each other at the dinner-table, to make what pretence they could of eating the mid-day meal that had grown cold waiting their return.

## CHAPTER XLI

### THE CAPTAIN MAKES A REQUEST

THE morning after the ball, Washington slept late. He was tired, and, moreover, his wife lengthened his slumbers purposely by darkening his bedroom and giving explicit orders to all the members of the household that he should not be disturbed.

"His exertions at the fire have greatly fatigued the General," she said to Mrs. Hamilton, as she passed through the kitchen on her way to her flower garden, to which remark the good housekeeper bowed a silent assent. Mrs. Hamilton was scrambling some eggs for the delayed breakfast, and her temper was slightly ruffled by the irregularity of this long-deferred meal. Eggs, especially when scrambled, do not improve by waiting. Neither do women's tempers.

An hour or more later, there was a quaint and pretty tableau on the lawn in front of the old Hasbrouck House.

"Here are some tulips, my dear," and Mrs. Washington curtsied graciously before her husband as she offered him a fine bouquet, freshly gathered by her own hand.

"Thank you, my love." General Washington bowed. The fresh breezes played with his powdered cue; the sunlight saucily danced on his white brow; a bit of earth ventured to stick to his silver-buckled shoe;

a dead leaf caught hold of his shining silk stocking. All nature was bolder than his deferential wife ; but her husband understood her, and the wordless apology was accepted. He kissed his haughty Martha's fingertips, and possibly might have ventured to touch her powdered cheek with his lips, had not the sound of steps coming up the gravel walk cut short the gallant intention. Ah, well-a-day, mature lovers such as these must expect interruptions !

"What news?" said Washington, greeting the one approaching.

"Pardon, General," Captain Ford began hastily, as if anxious to get done with a disagreeable matter ; "I have been to the glen this morning, and found—nothing."

"Is that all?" Washington asked, as his wife withdrew. His eyes rested a moment longer than usual on the man who had addressed him, held by his haggard appearance and saddened face. The bright smile was gone, the customary cheeriness vanished. It was Ford's face attached to Ford's form, but his happy smile was not to be seen, even after a second and a third glance.

"It is my whole report, sir," the sorry captain answered. Ford lingered with something further evidently upon his mind, and, encouraged by the kindly interest in the Commander's look, ventured to say : "I would like to go to the front, sir, if you will permit. If there is any more fighting to be done, I am ready to do my share."

Washington looked at the speaker critically ; the baffled, anxious expression he wore belied his negative report. Moreover, poor Jonathan looked almost as ill as he felt.

"Will you step inside my office?" the General said, motioning the captain to precede him into the house, and following him quickly into his private room, where, somewhat to the surprise of both, Louis Paschal awaited an audience. He had galloped back from his rendezvous with incredible swiftness, cutting across fields and jumping fences, after an Indian fashion of his own. Success and excitement had lent him wings, while the reverse conditions had been weights upon Captain Ford's feet.

It has been said that words are essential to the communication of thought. Be this as it may, no words were needed to communicate the thoughts which passed between these two men, as they stood thus unexpectedly together before their Chief. Neither was Peggy's presence needed to make her relations to the rivals understood.

They hated each other most cordially. The Frenchman bowed in response to the General's grave salutation. He showed no traces of the excitement through which he had passed, save that of a quickened intentness and more alert understanding. He was nerved up to a high tension, yet there was no sign of overstrain. A nervous temperament has its recompenses: it endures where the phlegmatic breaks. It is an elastic that can be stretched farther than a cotton string, although, alas! when at last it snaps, it is a worthless thing indeed.

"I have a package to be delivered in Fishkill," said Washington to the Frenchman, "and I wish it to reach its destination as soon as possible." With this he took a sealed package from his table and placed it somewhat formally in Paschal's hands. Paschal withdrew at once, and Washington turned to the captain:

"You desire a change," he said, kindly.

"If it please you, sir."

"Very well; you may get ready to accompany me on a short tour of observation; we may be absent a week. I must leave for West Point at three by the clock this afternoon."

"I will be ready, your Excellency."

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE UNSEALED PACKAGE

THREE days before the ball, when all the little Newburgh world—at least all the feminine part of it—were busy with prospective arrangements, other things of more importance were happening in the larger world of New York. It seems strange sometimes, when we are falling in love, or going on a picnic, or cleaning house, to discover our next-door neighbor to be equally engrossed with other joys and sorrows. Two families in one block may be so differently occupied on one and the same day that it would appear that two different worlds existed side by side. A daughter in one house passes a college examination, while a mother in the home around the corner gives birth to twin boys. Who shall say which occurrence outranks the other in the eyes of the recording angel as he makes the entries in his book?

In New York, people were talking of the recent arrival of Sir Guy Carleton from England, to take command of the British army, and no mention whatever was there made of Mrs. Knox's dance at New Windsor. Washington alone was interested in both events. He had been notified by his antagonist of his

coming, in a formal and elaborate letter, whose meaning puzzled him not a little. The letter was conciliatory, and the Commander-in-Chief was inclined to think that Sir Henry Clinton's successor was presuming on his credulity.

"I am obliged to declare," Washington wrote to Congress, "as my candid opinion, that the enemy have no serious intention to admit our independence."

Two days later,—the day of the ball,—he wrote again, this time to the President of Congress :

"For my own part, I view our situation such that, instead of relaxing, we ought to improve the present moment, as the most favorable to our wishes. The British nation appear to be staggered and almost ready to sink beneath the accumulated weight of debt and misfortune. If we follow the blow with vigor and energy, I think the game is ours."

It was on the day following the sending of this letter that Washington commanded Captain Ford to accompany him on a tour of inspection of the various camps and fortifications in the vicinity. He desired to acquaint himself with their condition in order to make ready for any possible attack. He considered Sir Guy Carleton an unknown quantity, and was determined to be ready for any movement he might make. Thus, strangely enough, what was of national importance furnished an occasion for diverting an unhappy swain's mind. Jonathan Ford was more than ready to accompany Washington.

The troops were found at their respective stations; apparently ready for instant service at any point to which they might be sent, but in sore need of funds. Their pay was fifteen months overdue, and they were discontented and discouraged. It was everywhere be-

lieved that if Washington held the purse-strings, instead of Congress, these difficulties would soon be settled. Washington was the hero, and there can be little doubt that this short trip of investigation greatly influenced their action soon after in offering him the dictatorship. There was something of this nature in the air. Washington felt the danger without quite understanding it, and his heart grew heavy. The sympathy he gave the soldiers only made matters worse, while their admiration for him depressed rather than cheered him. The hour was a dark one, and the Commander saw no way to brighten it.

At last, wearied with a nine days' jaunt, and heartsick at much he had seen, although yet confident of the triumph of the American cause at no distant time, he returned to the peaceful quiet of the old Hasbrouck House at Newburgh. The blue Fishkill hills, crowned with a May-day verdure, welcomed him; the placid water of the wide Hudson gave him good cheer; even the gnarled apple-trees in the orchard blushed to the tips of their branches, pink with joy to see him back again.

Louis Paschal made an early attempt to see him on the day after his return. His second month at Newburgh—it had seemed a year—was drawing to a close, and he was fully alive to the imperative necessity of its being made the last. Prescott had been kept informed of the preparations for the kidnapping, but had made no reply. This, however, caused no abatement of the Frenchman's interests. "*The plan must succeed!* It must, it must," he said to himself, again and again.

He had been a little apprehensive over General Washington's sudden departure; and the fact that his

rival, Ford, had accompanied him added somewhat to his fear. He had what he considered important news to communicate, and, with his usual tact, succeeded in pressing his claim before that of all other applicants at the office door.

"Your Excellency," he began, mustering command of his best English, as he was quite able when not over excited; "I beg you will permit me to relate what I have learned, the most inadvertently, during your deplored absence from us. It is a sacred confidence, and since all have been my friends in Newburgh, I have wish to injure no one."

"Proceed," said Washington, with attention.

"I was passing the house of Monsieur Colden, this morning, when I observed a crowd of people about his door. One said there was an accident. *Mon Dieu!* One said a man was dying. One said it was an attempt at murder. I hasten myself. They make me to enter a back room. I see the unfortunate. He breathes slowly, but he speaks not. I examine him. It is by their request."

"Proceed, sir," Washington said, with growing interest.

"But, yes, Monsieur. I proceed. This man bears an unsealed package on his person. I approach his person, the package it falls at my feet. It is from Baron Steuben to General Knox. I accuse no one. This is the house of Monsieur Colden, an honorable man, is it not so? The most charming daughter of this most honorable man had the honor at the ball——"

"What about the package?" asked Washington, interrupting him.

"I proceed. The man had fallen ill most strangely.

He looks to die. I think it is a fit. He is the guest of an honorable citizen."

"Speak quickly, my good friend."

"It is all. I beg permission but to tell your Excellency the message, as I learned it from the unsealed package. If the man die, the message is not lost. If he live, he is at the house of an honorable man."

"You have my permission," said General Washington. The spy approached and related, in a low tone, the purport of the letter, whose contents he had well conned. He had taken it from the man's pocket, broken the seal, carefully studied it, so as to make use of the information if need be, and then, by means of a hot poker, had succeeded in making the wax appear as before. He gave a marvellously accurate account of the matter which it contained, and his hearer's face changed as he listened. Horror and amazement wrote themselves down on his stern features, as Paschal continued, till at length the words: "My God, it is worse than I feared; can such things be possible?" escaped from Washington's blanched lips.

There was a long silence, when all had been told; then the Commander said: "Please leave me now, and oblige me by keeping silent on this matter till I advise you."

As the dismissal was peremptory, the Frenchman was unable to reiterate that "Monsieur Colden was an honorable gentleman;" that "the messenger's illness was strange and sudden;" that "he himself desired to injure no one;" and left the room. He was satisfied that he had gained all that was possible by this piece of chance luck. The letter, doubtless, had long before this reached its destination; yet he had made his posi-



tion more secure with the Commander-in-Chief by this fortunate opportunity. Ford could do his worst now; he had given Washington a piece of important information, which he knew would be verified without his assistance.

The package which the Frenchman intercepted happened to be of considerable consequence, as later events proved; it was nothing less than the letter prepared by Colonel Nicola, that was being forwarded to General Knox for his examination and approval, before its delivery to General Washington.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

It was a beautiful May morning, but Washington was in his office, occupied in dictating a letter to his trusted secretary, Major Jonathan Trumbull. A cloud rested on his spirits; a baleful cloud, which hung threateningly over the country he so dearly loved. His usual power of concentration was great, but today he had been waiting the threatened storm. Hearing a knock at the office door, he paused in his dictation, and looked up. "There was a knock, I think," he said to Trumbull, who had rested his quill pen against the inkhorn, to wait further dictation. The secretary stepped to the door to admit an orderly, who bore a sealed package.

"Colonel Nicola sends his compliments, your Excellency," the man said with a military salute; "and he directed me to wait for a reply."

"Very well," was the pleasant answer. Then,

raising his voice a trifle, he called : " Oh, Mrs. Hamilton." Seeing the house-keeper through the open door, he said : " Please give this friend of mine some breakfast ; we must not let him think they fare better on the other side of the river than we do." He receipted for the package, and, as the man withdrew, seated himself in the wooden chair in the corner of his office—the chair which stands in the same place today—and proceeded to break the seals. It has been said that Washington was ever prompt to act, and we may believe he did not hesitate as to what course to take, when his eye fell on the many pages of closely written sheets before him. He had heard the substance of the letter already, thanks or no thanks to Paschal ; but had he not been thus partly warned, his tour through the country would have prepared him, far more than the present communication, which merely breathed the discontented spirit of the unpaid soldiers.

One may read in the archives of the State Department at Washington the original of this letter, which reads as follows :

FISHKILL, 21st May, 1782.

SIR :

The favourable reception your Excellency was pleased to give to the representation I was deputed to make in the name of the field officers of the Army, has induced me to trouble you on a matter I conceive of importance.

Possibly the event I foresee, may not, if at all, take place for a considerable time, but as that is uncertain, & the purport of the enclosed of moment, & must require mature deliberation, I choose not to defer mentioning it any longer.

I request your Excellency to suspend your Opinion 'till you go through the whole, & not judge of it by parts.

For brevity sake I use the words we and us, to designate the whole American army, tho' some parts of what I may say may not be strictly applicable to me, but as you are well acquainted

with circumstances, you will be pleased to omit me in idea where I cannot with propriety be introduced.

I have the honour to assure you I am with respect,

Your Excellency's

Most Obedient Servant,

LEWIS NICOLA, Col. Inv. Corps.

Addressed :

To his Excellency

GENERAL WASHINGTON.

A long document accompanied this epistle ; a document which set forth in insidious language the desire of the army to push aside the power of the Continental Congress and form a government of monarchical character, with Washington at its head as dictator or king. This proposition expressed the intense feelings of men who were suffering from lack of all the comforts of life ; from men who had bravely striven for a country, that now gave them only empty promises for recompense. Vainly had appeals been made to Congress. Vainly had full information been sent to those in authority, and yet—the waiting soldiers remained hungry and half-clothed. Colonel Nicola's argument described the advantages of monarchies over republics. It proved, at least to its author's satisfaction, that the latter were shortlived and the former more energetic and beneficial. It eulogized Washington's widely felt influence ; it hinted at improvements on the British monarchy ; hoped for the possible conquest of Canada ; and, finally begged to have the whole matter, if disapproved, considered confidential. The real purpose of the letter was contained in the following brief but important paragraph :

“Owing to the prejudice of the people, it might not at first be prudent to assume the title of royalty, but, if

all things were adjusted, we believe strong arguments might be produced for admitting the title of KING."

As soon as Washington had carefully read the communication, he directed Major Trumbull to write the following reply : a signed and witnessed copy of which he took the precaution to retain :

NEWBURGH, May 22d, 1782.

COLONEL LEWIS NICOLA :

SIR :—With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment, I have read with attention the sentiments you have submitted to my perusal. Be assured, sir, no occurrence in the course of the War has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the army as you have expressed, and I must view with abhorrence and reprehend with severity. For the present the communication of them will rest in my own bosom, unless some further agitation of the matter shall make a disclosure necessary.

I am much at a loss to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address, which to me seems big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my country. If I am not deceived in the knowledge of myself, you could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable. At the same time, in justice to my own feelings, I must add that no man possesses a more sincere wish to see ample justice done to the army than I do, and so far as my powers and influence, in a constitutional way extend, they shall be employed to the utmost of my abilities to effect it, should there be any occasion. Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself, or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind, and never communicate, as from yourself or any one else, a sentiment of the like nature.

With esteem, I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,  
GEO. WASHINGTON.

This answer crushed by its decisiveness the growth of an idea that boded disaster to the cause of American liberty. No act of equal importance for the ages was ever given effect by Washington's signature. No patriotic duty was more promptly, thoroughly, and modestly performed. When it became known, later, it gave wondrous zest to the words of the patriotic song :

**NO KING but GOD ! NO KING but GOD !**

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE ANVIL MADE READY

AGAIN Louis Paschal stood before the forge, looking up and down the road, full of anxious thoughts. It was broad daylight ; the afternoon of the day which had witnessed the overthrow of the far-reaching plans of the American officers who had made Colonel Nicola their mouthpiece. Under the pretext that his horse needed a new shoe, Paschal dismounted, and, while the blacksmith tested the shoes, he strolled outside. Ettrick noticed him from a window of his house, and cautiously approached.

Delay tests courage. Ettrick was brave enough when he planned his dinner party, but nervously apprehensive now that a week had passed by ; and it is possible that the whole affair might have fallen through, had not Paschal ridden over to the Grove for the express purpose of letting the prospectant host know of Washington's return to Newburgh. It was the spy's first visit in this neighborhood since his foolish fright at the wooden soldier, and, although this affair was yet

unexplained, he suspected Peggy of being in some way concerned in it. He had at first suspected Ford, but as later events had not confirmed this idea, he laid the blame at Margaret's door, and felt doubly chagrined. He had hitherto fully believed that she loved him.

"Then we can have our dinner party without delay," Ettrick said, when he had received the younger man's report.

"The sooner the better," was the ready answer; "and now, Monsieur, when may we assist? It is an honor we await at your hands."

"I think"——the host hesitated, and the blacksmith, having taken off one good shoe and replaced it with another not quite new, now drew nearer, vainly hoping to catch the men's whispered words.

"Let us go inside my house," Mr. Ettrick continued, noticing the smith's attitude; "I have some good New England rum that I always take at noon, for my spring disorders; will you join me?"

As he led the way across the road, Paschal threw a backward glance at the forge; then, remembering that he had not paid for the shoeing, tossed the man a couple of shillings. General Prescott had given him a well-filled purse, which all Newburgh and New Windsor helped to empty.

"My usual price is four shillings," the smith cried, mendaciously, stopping, however, to pick up from the grass the two which had been thrown to him.

"*Mon Dieu!*" was the laughing answer, "but these people charge well for iron. They turn it into gold, is it not so?" He gave the two extra shillings as he spoke, without stopping to notice his companion's parsimonious caution.

"The anvil is always ready," the blacksmith muttered, giving no other thanks for the undeserved largess.

The two plotters disappeared behind the grove of trees. They did not enter the house, although the whirr of Peggy's wheel gave a sweet invitation, but stood concealed from the view of possible passers-by, under the locusts, to finish their interview.

"Day after to-morrow evening is the best time for us, and the soonest," Ettrick said at last. He knew, like women in love, that if he stopped to look before he leaped, he should not leap at all. His courage was never lacking when the Frenchman was with him, and he realized that now, if ever, was the time.

"We will say then, if Washington can come, that it will be day after to-morrow at half-past seven ; and you will also come, of course?"

"Certainly."

"And you will not fail in your part, this time?"

"God will not withhold me, I trust, Monsieur."

"Fiddlesticks' ends! Are you an old woman? You will act like a man, and leave the good Lord out of the bargain."

The Frenchman crossed himself.

"You're no Papist!" the other cried, in horror.

"Monsieur, let us attend to the affairs of the moment. I will be present. The Indians will be in the glen with their canoes as soon as it is dark." Paschal pointed significantly towards Murderer's Creek, indicating a spot opposite where they now stood. "Two of them will remain with the canoes, while ten will be ready, fully instructed in their part, to follow Messieurs Colden and Jansen, when they see my signal at the window. There will be fourteen well armed men—including ourselves—against *one*. Do I understand the plan?"

"I hope you—we, will not fail again," Ettrick said, eagerly, and the interview being over, the two separated, mutually pleased with one another. There seemed at last every chance of success. The anvil was ready, and, later, the sparks would fly. Later, the sparks flew indeed.

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE CUT DIRECT

"MARGARET, my dear," began Mr. Ettrick, the morning after his talk with Paschal at the forge, "now that the slaves have withdrawn to their quarters, I desire to speak with you on a rather important matter."

"Yes, father." The unusual suavity of the address did not deceive the daughter in the least. She was tired and listless; moreover, troubled about the treasonable plot she had discovered, and distressed that her memory yet played her false concerning her faint. Such experiences were altogether new to a healthy nature such as Margaret's, and she was vainly trying to set her mind in order when her father's words fell on her dull ears.

"I desire to invite General Washington to dine with us to-morrow evening," her father said presently, as if such an invitation to the Commander-in-chief were quite an ordinary affair at Ettrick Grove.

"To-morrow night, father?" Peggy was overwhelmed. "We have very little meat in the larder," she added; her house-keeping soul stirred to activity by the shortness of the warning given her. "Would it not be better to wait till we have game, or at least



more chickens, before we ask such fine folks to dinner here?"

"We have wine and a welcome, my dear," replied the master of the house, grandly; "and I trust, under your guidance, Dinah can make a few dishes fit to offer our guests. Do you not remember what Mr.—I mean *General* Washington himself said of having friends to dinner? It was everywhere repeated, and I believe his cook took offence."

"What was it?" Margaret did not care a pin what the saying was, but hoped to divert her father and keep him in a good humor, by affecting an interest in an anecdote he was evidently ready to tell. The necessity of keeping him in a good humor was important; else how could she gain her point, and coax him to abandon the idea of this dinner; for she well knew to thwart him was but to make him more obstinate, since he was a man.

"Ah, I almost forget—he said something, rather tersely put, about the cook putting the dishes farther apart, to better cover a rather meagrely furnished board."

Peggy laughed; faintly, it is true, yet she laughed; and her father proceeded more amiably: "Now, to our own affairs. I leave all to you. I wish you to ride in to Newburgh immediately, and give the invitation. The scamper on Mollie will do you good, for you look pale."

"Oh, I am well enough. You are as bad as Chloe, who wants me to take a dose of rhubarb and treacle, just because other people need it in the spring. I cannot swallow the nasty stuff."

"Doubtless exercise in the open air is more wholesome," Ettrick replied; his wisdom, although he knew

it not, a full hundred years ahead of most physicians. "Now make haste," he went on; "and when you return, go at once to the kitchen and consult with Dinah. I want our guests to have the best."

"Father, do you really believe General Washington will come?"

"Surely; why not?"

"I have heard he goes out very little, on account of Mrs. Washington's sickness, and his acceptance of Mrs. Knox's invitation astonished every one."

"Margaret, do as I bid you. Remember the words of Holy Scripture, and presume not to interfere with matters out of your sphere. A woman has her duties, and a good woman never presumes to advise a man about his affairs. There is ever a curse on her if she turns aside from the work God gives her. 'She layeth her hand to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her.'"

As Mr. Ettrick repeated the verses he strutted across the sunlit dining-room like a turkey-cock, his thick, red neck-cloth adding to the resemblance. His daughter's face whitened as she watched him, and his next remark, although meant to cheer her, signally failed in the kindly attempt.

"If you are afraid we are not able to please so great a man as General Washington, let me set your mind at rest by saying that Mr. Paschal has promised to be with us. You like him, eh? What say? Is he not your sweetheart? Ah, an old father like me is not quite deaf, nor altogether blind. I have seen you two together when you did not know it. Have I not guessed your secret, Meg, my child?"

"We have no secret," Margaret said quickly, her cheeks now aflame.

"Eh! what's this? You seemed greatly pleased to see him the other day at the cabin, when you burst in upon a conference."

"Oh, father! How can you say that? I did not see Mr. Paschal at the cabin at all."

There was surprise and indignation in the explanation, for the marked irony of Mr. Ettrick's words had not escaped his daughter. The worst thing about quarrelling with one's own family is the certainty that nothing bitter that is said will be lost; since relatives, both by inherited traits and long living together, know without fail the joints of their opponent's armor, and aim accordingly.

"Has he not proposed marriage?" was the next hasty question.

"No, nor would I accept him," was the proud answer. "I beg you do not ask him here; ask, rather, Captain Ford; and if the captain does lack some of the graces and refinements of the Frenchman, we at least can trust him."

"Ah, well-a-day!" this with a conciliatory smile. "Maids will be but maids, and men are but men. You will know better a second time; but we must ask Mr. Paschal to dine with us. A woman must never make an enemy of a discarded lover, d'ye know? Set the table with your poor mother's best china; have plenty to eat and drink, and we shall not need the homely captain's help, I reckon. Off with you. Off with you."

There seemed no way but to obey; so Peggy mounted her pony with what courage she could muster, hoping a kind Providence would show her a possible escape from the dilemma.

At last, the moment was ripe for Captain Jonathan Ford. At last fate was to give him a chance. Had he not promised to defend this fair lady? Had he not told her so, and told her with emphasis? Margaret's face illumined at the remembrance. Yes, he would help her. He would deliver Washington. He would save her father. To a woman, the word "saviour" may have a human significance; and now, in this hour of dire distress, she called the man she had formerly disliked, her Rock, her strong Defence, her Tower, her Fortress; aye, and without the least irreverence, her Saviour? It was at this moment that plain John appeared, without warning, in a turn of the road. Impulsively reigning Mollie in, so as to block the progress of the captain's large bay horse, she timidly said, in a tone almost too low for a squirrel on the fence to catch her words: "Good-morning, Captain Ford, I am so glad to meet you. I want to speak to you; may I, please?"

She was so sure of his answer, that she would not have waited for a formal assent, had not her agitation forced her to catch her breath before pouring out her whole story. In the interval, she had time to see Ford with a new understanding. Had her eyes, hitherto, been "holden"—in the old Bible phraseology—that she could not see? Was she like the blind man from whom the scales fell at the Master's touch? What had at last given her power to recognize the presence of a good, brave man?

Presently, in a half-minute's space, she saw a curious look, very like a sneer, come over the officer's face. He bowed distantly, and without raising his hat said sternly: "Miss Ettrick, permit me to pass;" then touched his horse with his sharp, cruel spurs, and galloped away.

This time Margaret neither fainted nor wept, but a new and fierce expression settled on a mouth which hitherto had known no such hard lines in its red curves. The short upper lip lengthened; the dimples in the cheeks faded out; she hit poor, innocent Mollie a cut on her side, and hastened as fast as four feet could carry her on towards Newburgh. A robin, which had been tugging at a worm in the wet earth, flew off at the sound of the pony's feet, singing as he flew. A gray rabbit, in a thicket nearby, sat up on his haunches to see pretty Peggy pass, thinking she was as fair a sight as any to be seen; but neither rabbit nor robin could sympathize with her sad heart. Some blossoms on the lower branch of an overhanging apple-tree fluttered in the breeze, and Mollie made a grab for them because they were invitingly near her nose, and she was still munching their perfumed pinkness when her mistress drew rein outside the Hasbrouck House.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### A MOTHER CONFESSOR

THE sentinel pacing back and forth on his beat before the door granted Margaret admission with so admiring a glance, that her usual calmness was partly restored before Mrs. Washington came into the big room where she had been left waiting, and greeted her most affectionately.

It seems that General Washington and his wife had talked over the rifling of the Ettrick garden more than once, and had differed in regard to the matter. This, then, was my lady's chance to make amends for a wrong

she felt had been done to an innocent family. She had always fancied the looks of this tall, fair girl, and latterly felt rather sorry for her ; so that, now, when she had an opportunity, she determined to be as gracious as her dignity would permit. Peggy, in the simplicity of her blue cotton frock and calico sunbonnet, presented a strong and interesting contrast to the stately dame.

"You are as welcome as flowers in May, my dear," Mrs. Washington said, affably. "What has ailed you, my child, that you have neglected till this late day the paying of your respects to our household? You are as white as any narcissus in my garden, and as sweet, I am sure ; although not as vain, I trust. Sit still, my child ; never mind your reverences and make me no curtsy, I pray you."

"I thank you, madam," Peggy faltered, flushing with the honor done her ; the message she carried, undelivered, growing more hateful at each gracious word of her host. A cup of hot tea was presently brought to her by Mrs. Hamilton, which she vainly tried to drink.

"Are not the *trimmings* right?" Mrs. Washington asked, laughing, "for so that saucy black-eyed girl, Sallie Jansen, tells me the Dutch call the sugar and cream."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You are English, not Dutch?"

"My mother was an American, ma'am."

"Ah, yes ; and she is dead, I am told."

"Yes, ma'am." Peggy pushed the tea aside, and felt in the pocket which hung by her side for her handkerchief, for the tears were running down her cheeks."

"You remember her?"

"Oh yes, ma'am. She taught me all I know,—to knit, to spin, to cook, and to read. I miss her all the time. I have no one to whom I can tell my troubles——"

"Have you troubles?"

"Ah, yes, ma'am."

"Why not tell them to your good father?"

"He is not like my dear mother."

"I am sure you honor him with your obedience, my child." No answer this time from the penitent, and the Mother Confessor went on.

"Your life should be a very happy one: plenty of space, freedom from care, air and sunshine all around you. Be careful, my love, that you do not grow ungrateful to your heavenly Father, who crowns you with so many blessings."

There was a pause, broken presently by more questions from the kind hostess.

"Do you spin much? Do you card? Do you milk the cows? Do you churn? Idleness is the devil's workshop, so I hope you keep yourself busy early and late."

"I spin and knit and card, but we only keep one cow and the slaves milk and make butter. The pasture is rocky, and there is not much churning." The recital of these homely details had the desired effect. The girl was rapidly regaining her composure.

"Do you play and sing?" Mrs. Washington rose and opened the new red cedar spinnet as she spoke, and ran her hands lightly over the short keyboard. "The Frenchman makes fine music for us," she continued; "but the General is often so fatigued in the evening that the sound disturbs him. Will you try a song or psalm, if I accompany you?"

Surely this was condescension, yet Peggy was seemingly unappreciative of the honor conferred.

"I beg you to excuse me, ma'am," she faltered, rising when Mrs. Washington rose, but not following her to the instrument,—the same one which stands silent and tuneless in the old Hasbrouck House today, a wonder to all guests,—“I only sing when I am sure nobody is near to hear me. I just sing when I feel happy, all by myself. I cannot sing today, ma'am; please do not ask me.”

The tears stood in the poor child's eyes as she spoke, and in another minute she felt motherly arms thrown about her and received a sweet kiss on her forehead.

"I—am not really idle," she faltered, letting her reserve break down in spite of her attempted self-control; "nor ungrateful."

"Tell me your trouble, dear; my daughter was your age once, and I love all young girls for my Nellie's sake." She paused, and a new look came into the proud face. The "Lady Washington" expression we see painted in the familiar portraits and miniatures had vanished altogether; yet, despite this softness, the kind mentor presently continued in the manner invariably used with the young a century ago. "I hope you have not done anything wrong: no one can be happy who does wrong, you know."

"No, madam," Peggy said, proudly; "I have not done wrong, nor will I do wrong if I can help it. Please let me see the General, so that I can deliver to him a message from my father. That is my errand this morning. I will not trouble you longer." The moment of being petted was over. The girl was a woman grown, and was ready to do a woman's part.



Mrs. Washington, however, was a trifle displeased, and the memory of Lucy Knox came before her.

"The General is much engaged this morning," she said more coolly, a marked change coming over her former manner. "He is this moment occupied with an *attaché*, Monsieur Paschal. Pray, cannot your business await his convenience, or must he wait yours?"

"Dear lady," pleaded Margaret, too much engrossed with the peril which she knew threatened Washington to observe any bitterness in this address, "I ask but five minutes of his most valuable time. The message is from my father. I was to deliver it in person; but, of course, I will wait his Excellency's pleasure."

"The General saw Miss Ettrick arrive, and wishes to see her in his office before she leaves," announced Paschal, coming out into the dining-room and gracefully approaching the two ladies.

Margaret rose without looking at him, but his gray eyes followed her with strange affection. He had made love to her, deceived her, doubted her, finally compromised her to save himself; yet in his volatile fashion his heart turned back to her. She was sad this morning, but always winsome and sweet.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### MARGARET TALKS WITH GENERAL WASHINGTON

"Be seated, Miss Ettrick," Washington said, with a kindly voice and smile. The girl obeyed, then rose again and came close to the overladen but orderly desk, to say in a voice as steady as she could muster: "Your Excellency will pardon the informality of the invitation

I bear, but my father desires you will honor us by dining with him tomorrow evening. He has long desired to show you this courtesy, and feels regret at the delay which circumstances have made unavoidable. He presents his respects and places his hospitality at your disposal. He will be pleased, also, if you will bring some friend with you."

It was certainly a carefully worded lesson, well learned and many times rehearsed ; for, since Mr. Ettrick dared not risk a written summons, he had drilled his daughter on this verbal one. She on her part blushed to be forced to give it, knowing full well the formal nature of all dealings with the Commander ; nor did the reason for the unusual omission of the courtesy of a letter make her task more agreeable. If Washington noticed the primitive style of the bidding, he considered it merely as an evidence of rural simplicity ; moreover, he was rather glad of this unexpected opportunity to study the character of the man whom Mrs. Washington thought had been treated too harshly in the matter of the confiscated treasure. He therefore turned to the trembling speaker with all his ordinary graciousness, to say : "Tell your father that I thank him for his very acceptable invitation, and, as I have no conflicting arrangements, it will give me pleasure to be at your house at the appointed hour, which—I think you did not mention the hour. Is it eight by the clock ?"

"Half-past seven, sir," father said.

"Pardon me. Shall I request my secretary to address a line to your honored father, and will you amiably accommodate me by being my message-bearer ?" The General was about to summon Major Trumbull, when something in the girl's face caused him to pause a moment and ask if he could serve her in any way. He

was surprised at the answer, in a low voice, rendered almost uncontrollable by excitement: "I beg you, sir, do not come."

"Indeed, then, my dear, I will not," was the prompt and amused reply; and seeing her agitation, and desiring to assist in restoring her composure, he added: "Is the larder low, or does the cow give no milk, or the hens no eggs? I am a farmer myself at home, and I know, to my cost, that these misfortunes often occur. I tell my wife that a lady is mistress in her own domain, and no one should intrude when he is not wanted."

"Please, sir, it is not that. You are always welcome. I am a true patriot. I am honored by your thought of coming to us, but—" here the voice was lowered, "there are dangers that I may not speak of to any one. I—I am afraid for your life."

"You do not fear I will starve at your table?" was asked, with continued playfulness.

"No, indeed! I would cook all day for you myself, but—do not come. Please, do not come!"

Washington wiped his glasses and looked his frightened guest full in the face. Two spots burned like red coals of fire in her hot cheeks; her hands trembled; she fingered the hem of her apron and looked down on the floor in silence.

Outside, Paschal was singing the inspiring, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." There was an incongruity, however, about the performance, for the light French accent illy matched the heavy German movement, and the sound jarred on the nerves of both listeners. It may be that Washington's reverent nature detected a falsity of feeling, for he immediately went to the open window and shut it. It fell clumsily as he released the

wooden peg which had held up the sash, and the consequent noise caused a temporary diversion.

"Shall I bring Monsieur Paschal with me as an escort?" the General presently asked, disregarding Peggy's warning altogether. He watched her closely as he spoke, and discovered her antipathy to the spy before she gave her emphatic answer.

"No. Please, no ; bring Captain Ford, if you must come at all."

"Do you prefer Captain Ford to Mr. Paschal?" This was asked with a directness which brought, as ever, a perfectly truthful answer. It was so strange to be thus questioned by General Washington himself, that Margaret, to her own surprise, found an answer ready.

"Yes, sir, I do ; but Captain Ford will not come to our house ; at least he will not want to come. He despises me. He passed me this morning on the road as a stranger. He has changed towards me ; I do not know why."

"And you ; have you not changed towards him?"

Suddenly, Peggy knew her heart to be a shuttlecock. Yes, she had changed ; for a month ago, she had not liked Captain Ford at all.

"Will you not tell me what troubles you, Miss Ettrick?" General Washington said at last : "I am at a loss to understand either your warnings or your fright, and I have found, after considerable experience, that to speak the truth boldly clears up mysteries far more quickly than to talk for hours diplomatically." There was so much encouragement in these words that the young girl spoke out with frankness, and in three minutes her astonished listener had full command of the situation.

"Have no fears for my safety," he said ; "I will come, escorted by the Frenchman ; and for the rest—trust me to be as merciful to your father as possible." He expressed his appreciation of the service she had rendered him, and then sought to terminate the interview by bidding her good-morning. Yet Margaret lingered. Few persons have the boldness to tarry after receiving the dismissal of one in authority. A physician's "good-morning," after a patient has twice repeated his symptoms and received all the necessary advice and medicine, means "make haste," and usually sends the unrelieved one off with a feeling of irritation. In the confessional, the priest's absolution and blessing cuts the garrulous penitent short,—and yet, Margaret hesitated.

"I have told you all I overheard," she said, at last ; "but I was unconscious part of the time. I ran fast, and fell down, and that is all I know. I never felt so queer before. I am ready to suffer in my father's place. He wants to go back to England ; he calls it home. This country is all the home I know. I have all my friends here, and I have been happy. Now, everything and everybody seem changed ; and I do not care whether I live or die. I have tried so hard to do the right thing, and yet the wrong thing has always happened. It would have been better if I had not tried. It was not easy to tell you what I knew of the danger. I—I—I have betrayed my dear father's life—I must suffer forever and ever. I was stupid to try to think that I, who am so weak, could be strong enough to make wrong right ; it can't be done."

"My child," Washington answered, gravely, "it can be done, and you have helped by trying. No one ever grows wiser or stronger by doing wrong. You say

you are weak ; believe me, you will grow stronger by doing right and taking the consequences pluckily. As for the rest, you have a long and I trust a useful life before you. 'Never' and 'forever' are God's words, not ours ; remember that. Have not I, in my own person, had every reason to think everything had forever gone wrong, when now at last, heaven be praised, everything is coming right ? Wait, Miss Ettrick ; and later you too will see everything coming right ; and will bless God for these dark days. I appreciate your heroism and self-sacrifice, and others will not forget what you have done for me today."

"But, my poor father?"

General Washington's face darkened.

"I will be as merciful as I can," he answered after a pause, "and, again—good-morning."

"Will you accept an escort home?" asked Paschal, when the girl at last came slowly out of the office, leaving the Commander bowed in silence over his desk, his heart sick with sorrow. Washington roused at the sound of the question asked, and stepping into the dining-room said with considerable sternness :

"Miss Ettrick will return as she came, unescorted. Ask the servant who took charge of her horse to fetch him to the eastern door, and, when the lady has gone, tell Captain Ford that I desire to speak with him."

Washington watched Peggy canter swiftly away, then, turning his head, looked a moment at the Frenchman. "I hardly wonder that he fascinates every one at first," he said to himself. "So—he is going to take *me* to New York, is he?" The Commander looked decidedly amused.

Far along on the homeward road the young hostess

was speeding her lazy Mollie, for there was much to be done in the kitchen, and the high sun told of noon and a day half gone.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### AN AFFAIR OF CEREMONY

NOTWITHSTANDING Peggy's most industrious preparations in the matter of sweets and pasties, the dinner was a simple affair, consisting only of two courses,—a roast and an apple pie, accompanied by seed cakes. The wine-cellar, however, was unlocked, and from its most secret recesses there appeared two bottles of old Madeira, to which were added some hard cider and a whole demijohn of genuine New England rum.

"'Pears mos' like a wed'n feas'," Dinah said, as she and chuckling Chloe together surveyed the splendor of the preparations.

"'Sho', go long wid yer foolin'," answered the other slave, tartly, "Missy dunno her own min' yet, I reckon."

Six candles decked the board, their soft light seeming to shed a glory over everything. The parlor and hall were straightened out into uncomfortableness, after the rigid unlounging fashion of the day; the few books read were locked behind curtained glass doors in one bookcase, with the exception of the Floral Annual, which was left on the marble-topped centre-table, solely for its decorative effect. The scant cotton curtains, usually drawn, were left apart, that the light from the windows might gladden the coming guests along the dark lane.

"I hear the horses' feet, father," Margaret cried at last, after many minutes of strained waiting. She was conscious of the hazard of the occasion ; a hazard not less exciting also to her father. Both were silent a moment, when, after a double rap at the door, Pete ushered in the guests.

"*General* Washington," announced the servant, adding in a tone meant to be a shade less deferential, "and *Mister* Peskill."

The whites of the servants' eyes as they waited at the table were not as striking as the pallor of the hostess's cheeks. When a favorite dish fell on the floor she forgave the colored woman's awkwardness, knowing herself to be sufficiently unnerved to break the whole dinner service. Her hands trembled, and she never noticed the omission when Pete began sharpening the knife without waiting for grace to be said. Her father replied to the compliments of the day at random ; the Frenchman, remembering his last call at the house, grew anxiously apprehensive, while only Washington preserved his calmness of demeanor. The talk at last turned upon the weight of public opinion, and Paschal improved a favorable opportunity to ask the General if it were not true, in America at least, that the "voice of the people was the voice of God"? As he was not answered at once, he added, "I myself have suffered from evil tongues,—I, who am nothing and nobody,—while, as for your Excellency,"—he poured himself out a third glass of wine as he spoke,—“I should think you would be oppressed by the opinions of the multitude of your advisers.”

"There is a quaint Dutch saying," Ettrick added, without waiting for Washington to reply, and anxious to prolong the conversation by every possible expedient :



Niemands tong, noch niemands pen  
Maakt my anders dan ik ben :  
Spreek, quaadspreekers  
    Spreek zonder end  
Niemand en word van  
    U geschand.

"I have never harbored the expectation," Washington replied, gravely ; "nor have I any great desire that all men should think well of me. To inquire my duty, and do it, has been my aim." He spoke with the utmost simplicity, and when Margaret lifted her eyes from the roast she could not eat, she gathered new courage, both to endure the present situation and face the trials to come. There was more mechanical conversation, and soon the pastry was set before the young hostess ; later, the cloth, after the old fashion, was removed, there being no table decorations to prevent, and nuts and wine were passed.

When Margaret at last arose and withdrew, the Frenchman opened the door, saying, as he attempted to touch her hand on the brass door-knob, "We shall deplore your absence, Mam'selle, and make haste to rejoin you." Hypnotism has its limits, its moral limits at least, and the girl shrank from his slight caress. Evidently the man's power over the girl who had loved him was gone, yet he had the assurance to whisper : "Dear one, later you will understand me better, and will forgive, for you are so pure and so good."

Washington was fond of nuts, so the men dallied over this last course, relating many a personal experience, till Ettrick, fearing the lateness of the hour, said, apologetically, "Shall we not follow my daughter into the parlor?"

"It will give me pleasure to do so," the guest of

honor replied, wearied with the forced formality and hollow insincerity of the occasion. Margaret's sweet face pleased him. He admired her pluck, her reserve and her courage, and wondered vaguely how he should contrive to spare her the disgrace her father's deserved punishment would bring upon her. She was innocent, but how could she entirely escape? The men found the young lady seated by the window, peering eagerly out into the darkness.

"Is Mam'selle an astrologer?" Paschal asked, coming close to her side, ostensibly to whisper sweet nonsense in her ear, but really, by exhibiting himself at the window, to give his allies the prearranged signal to approach nearer to the house. "Had I my will, your horoscope should contain nothing but lucky stars," he continued, as Peggy remained silent.

"Will you sing, Margaret?" her father asked, "unless General Washington may prefer to sit quietly and converse."

"Father, pray excuse me; I cannot sing tonight." She was making a brave attempt at self-control, but her voice betrayed her deep anxiety.

"I will be happy to hear your daughter's voice some other time," Washington said, to cover the embarrassment he knew the poor girl felt. "Perhaps, some time, she will come and hear our instrument at the Hasbrouck House; it is one of my wife's proudest possessions. At present let us sit in what my good mother called the 'gloaming,' and take a blind man's holiday. I promised Mrs. Washington not to remain late."

An amused smile played over the General's face as he said these last words. He was the only person present who seemed at ease. The conversation continued disconnectedly,—a padded sort of talk, such as

one often hears before decisive action. It comes in life, it comes in books ; it is stupid in itself, but it has its uses in both fact and fiction.

"We must not wear out our welcome," Washington at last remarked with a courteous tone, but secretly resolved to force the *dénouement* without much further delay.


"No danger, no danger," replied Ettrick, noiselessly rubbing his hands, the words ringing out falsely as he spoke them. Margaret shivered, but kept her place by the unshaded window as before. She soon heard her father telling Washington several trifling incidents of her childhood, to which he paid deferential attention.

"And she tells my wife she has been motherless for many years," Washington remarked, almost affectionately, glancing with tender pity towards the young girl, who was now scarcely able to conceal her ever-growing anxiety.

Sounds were now heard whose meaning every one present comprehended,—first in front of the house, then behind. Evidently the whole place was surrounded. The Frenchman, sure that the right moment for the final signal had arrived, stepped near the window, and then, with a careless movement, drew his handkerchief from his pocket and raised it slowly to his face.

The sound of the steps grew louder, and it seemed as if a dozen people were coming up on the porch. Ettrick, who had observed the spy's action, restlessly shifted his position, and grew rudely inattentive to the remarks of his distinguished visitor.

"Are you expecting guests so late?" Washington asked, hearing the commotion, and keenly observant of his host's great agitation. "We must make room for your other friends, sir. We will take our departure



immediately, and thank you for a very agreeable evening." Had Ettrick caught the Commander's eye he would have noticed a dark and dangerous look, which was greatly at variance with the deliberate politeness of his words. "We hope to have the pleasure of returning your generous hospitality before long," he continued, with quiet enjoyment of the singular tableau which he was closely watching. "Mrs. Washington suffers from a slight indisposition, which we fear was contracted during the rigors of the past winter, but she has a strong liking for your young and charming daughter, and we hope to see much of her this summer." But little notice was taken of this deliberate speech of ceremony.

Knowing that the decisive moment had arrived, and with his face almost colorless from extreme agitation, Paschal put his handkerchief back in his pocket, resting his hand upon a concealed pistol. Then he turned to meet his supposed allies, as a noisy crowd of men came trooping and stamping into the little hall. The Frenchman's heart beat high. For the first instant he did not lift his head to greet them. He could not move for joy. His hour of triumph was here, and at last, after the many disappointments and delays, Washington was his prisoner.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS

"WE must bid you good-evening," Washington said, as the noise in the hall increased; "we must leave you, sir."

"Not tonight," Ettrick responded, boldly levelling

his pistol on the Commander-in-Chief. "*You are my prisoner!*"

"*Pardon me, sir, but you are mine,*" was the quiet reply; and, as he spoke, a company of soldiers—the Life Guards from headquarters—rushed into the parlor and surrounded both Ettrick and Paschal.

The scene was dramatic in the extreme. The faces of several soldiers appeared at each of the windows. Escape was impossible. It would be difficult, indeed, to describe the utter astonishment and consternation of the conspirators, or their futile attempts at escape. But for Washington's interference, they would have been shot down without mercy, as the clicking of musketlocks in various parts of the room betokened their extreme peril.

Where, oh, where were Colden and the Indians? If only they could be summoned, a diversion, at least, would be created, and this might give an opportunity for escape. With a hopeless but desperate audacity, Paschal suddenly seized a chair and dashed it against a window, at the same time sending out through the broken panes an Indian call for help,—the native cry of distress,—to which he knew they would respond with their lives.

Had they deserted him to his fate, and gone on down the river without him?

No answering cry was heard.

Surely a second time some one had blundered, but it was not Washington, who stood quietly observant of the despair of his recent entertainers. It is a maxim of war that it is useless to dodge a shot after it has passed. The attempt upon his person did not longer concern him. It had failed.

After the first brief efforts to escape, Ettrick sank

down into a chair, a terror-stricken, speechless object. Paschal, in contrast, folded his arms; baffled, but erect and defiant. Margaret, now filled with remorse at what she had done, and icy cold with apprehension, turned to the window, and looked out into faces she did not see. The frightened slaves had fled to the cellar, and were crouching, in mortal terror, in its darkest corners.

"Disarm them and take them away," commanded Washington, and Ford stepped to Ettrick and Paschal and took possession of their pistols.

Waiting only to give Captain Ford some whispered directions, the Commander withdrew, and soon poor Peggy saw her father rudely borne away, while the Frenchman was obliged to follow in an equally ignominious plight. Paschal had no comprehension of the discovery of the plot, nor did he have time or opportunity to speak to Ettrick concerning the non-appearance of Colden and Jansen with the Indian allies.

Overwhelmed with fear for her father, Margaret sank upon the floor and moaned piteously. Outside, the men were noisily mounting, and soon the sound of the retreating horsemen was lost in the distance.

Margaret's first burst of grief soon spent its force, when suddenly she was startled by hearing the clank of a sabre near her, and hastily arose. In the recent tumult, she had not noticed the entrance of Jonathan Ford, but now she found him standing near her, and she evidently his prisoner.

"Let me pass!" she cried, angrily; "I tell you to let me pass."

"The lady may pass if she wishes, but only to her bedroom," was the impassive answer from the officer, who never ceased in his march back and forth across the small room, his sidearms greatly in evidence.

"Let me pass!"

"I must obey orders, madam; I am to guard you through the night."

"I will not allow it! I don't want you! Go at once!"

No answer; more marching; more clanking of side-arms.

"Am I then a prisoner in my own home?" The girl's cheeks flamed. Ford had seen her coquettish, teasing, at work, at play, troubled, sad, grave, and gay; but he had never seen her angry, and a man does not know a woman's whole strength till he sees her in a temper. Now Peggy was angry. She was sure fate had used her unkindly. She had bravely done her duty; she had told the truth to General Washington; she had warned him at the risk of her own father's life; and now she was humiliated by being left under Captain Ford's care. She glanced at him under her lashes, and for a single unreasoning minute was honestly glad that he was there. The frightened slaves were biding their time in the cellar. The unsought *tête-à-tête* would last unbroken till dawn.

"Captain Ford," said the prisoner from the window-seat at last, "it is foolish for you to stay here: I will promise not to run away. You will find me here tomorrow, when I am sure General Washington will be humane enough to relieve me from surveillance. Leave me, and let me call the servants together, that I may read prayers and retire."

"I have no objections, madam, to your private devotions, but my duty is to remain here."

"Sir, it is my house. I tell you, *Go!*"

No answer. Up and down, up and down, up and down, marched Jonathan Ford, getting his innings at

last, while my poor Lady Disdain vainly grew red and pale by turns, as she sat in the window-seat.

Vexed with herself for feeling vexed, Margaret at length began to realize the security of her novel situation, and determined, if possible, to shake the stiff captain out of his grim humor. She did not wish to let it be prematurely known that she had been the informer, since she hoped greater leniency would be shown her poor father if she held her peace; yet she was sure she might expect some favor on this account, in spite of his heinous crime.

"Pardon, Captain," she said, saucily, "if I humbly ask you why you insist upon remaining my guest at an hour when I need my usual rest?"

"Obedience to orders, madam," was the reply.

"I thank you, sir," this accompanied by a grotesque curtsy of a mocking sort; "but I like it not to lose my sleep. Will you favor me by taking a nap on the settle? You must be weary?"

"A soldier never sleeps on guard."

"Perhaps he sometimes eats or drinks? May I fetch you some refreshment?"

"I thank you, no."

"Are you not thirsty? We have a little rum left. Let me propose the General's health," and she took up a bottle.

"I thank you, no."

"Captain Ford," the fair hostess repeated, "I am not used to being treated in this way. I do not care a pin that you hold me prisoner in my own house. If it is your duty, I bow to the orders of General Washington. I submit gladly. I stand before you a prisoner, and a willing one, but I will be heard. You shall listen to me. Is it against orders for me to speak?"



"It is not, madam," the man replied. "I am here by the Commander's orders to guard you, but I am not expected to undertake the impossible. No one can control a woman's tongue."

"Nor a man's," retorted Margaret, sharply; "but—I only want to say a word." The girl grew somewhat earnest in the saying, and her ears grew pink; the flush running about her white throat like a crimson stain. "I want to know why you insulted me on the road the other day."

"If you do not know, I cannot tell you," was the surprising answer.

"Captain Ford, if my father were here, if any one were here; if—if—if even the Frenchman were here, spy and traitor as he is, he would make you answer for your insulting words. Apologize, sir; quickly, while I give you a chance."

Ford was silent.

"You will not?"

Silence. Peggy's wrath grew apace, but she curbed it into submission, as she saw how useless would be an outbreak.

"I hate the Frenchman," she said, inconsequently; "he is at the bottom of all my troubles, and yet——"

"And yet?" repeated Ford, a trifle more urbane at the halting confession.

"And yet, if he called on me for help, tonight, to-morrow night, any time, any where, I would help him if I could. I distrust him. He has lied to me and others. I know he is bad, but, because——"

"Because what, Miss Ettrick?" Ford asked, vividly remembering the picture of these two together in the distiller's cabin, and fearing to hear a confession he was sure the world would hear sooner or later; and yet,—

this was the woman he had wished to make his wife, the woman he had loved and honored !

“ Because I once loved him.”

There was a long pause, a pause in which one could hear the ticking of the clock in the hall. Presently, it struck midnight. There was a stealthy step outside the door, but neither prisoner nor guard noticed it, and Chloe crept back to her hiding-place in the garret.

“ ‘Pears mighty cu’rous,” she muttered ; “ but white folks is allus mighty cu’rous ; I allows for dat.”

“ Men are different from women,” resumed Margaret ; “ Mamma told me so when I was very little, playing with my dolls, and making believe about grown-up people. She said I would understand when I was older. I understand now, and I feel old. Do not let us talk any more, please. Let me go upstairs to bed. I am dreadfully worried about my poor father ; for myself I do not care.”

“ Before I escort you to your room, Miss Margaret,” —the address was a trifle less formal,—“ let me tell you that I do not at all understand you. I am a man, and would always love and honor where—one deserved love and honor. I cannot make fine phrases nor speak more plainly.”

He followed her up the narrow stairway, his heavy sword hitting the bare steps as he went, and, when her bedroom door was closed, he continued to pace up and down, up and down, outside till day dawned.

Margaret, too exhausted for sleep, lay prostrated on her white-curtained bed till a well-known voice sounded close by her side. It came from under the high bed, and its message was one of faithfulness in this hour of desertion and distress :

“ Missy, I’s here ; doan’ be afeared, honey, doan’ ; I’s here.”

## CHAPTER L

## "MORE"

THE preceding evening, before the shadows up in the glen near the still had blotted out the wonderfully fine picture of roots and rocks exposed on the bare brown banks ; of rushing water below and waving branches above ; the Tories, from whom Ettrick and Paschal expected so much, approached the door of the familiar rendezvous. Near the entrance to the cabin a solitary Indian, grimly smoking, awaited their arrival.

"Where are the other Indians?" Colden asked. For answer, the savage pointed to the door. Colden stepped forward and knocked. An eye appeared at a little peephole in the shutter, and presently the door cautiously opened.

"Everything all right, Pat?"

"It isn't *left*," was the laconic response. Following the voice, Colden stepped inside. Looking about the room and seeing no one, he exclaimed in surprise : "Where are the Indians?"

"I don't know," came unconcernedly from Pat, the sole occupant of the room ; "why not ask him?" pointing to the Indian outside.

"Where are the others?" repeated Colden, when he had stepped out of the cabin, speaking now with greater distinctness of enunciation, and in a louder tone of voice.

The chief again pointed towards the cabin.

"No, they are not !" Then vexed at the Indian's stolidity, and speaking in a high key, as if hoping to

make his meaning better understood, Colden slowly repeated, "Where—are—the—others?" with a downward stroke of his forefinger at each word.

The Indian remained speechless and looked unconcernedly up into one of the trees where a squirrel chattered noisily. Then Jansen took up the *rôle* of investigator, and asked the same question, but added various guttural sounds, which to an English ear strongly resembled the Indian language; reinforcing this with a pantomime, which he ended by extending all the fingers of both his hands, then a single finger, and pointing into the surrounding woods as he did so. The squirrel's chattering sounded like a laugh; the wind whistled unsympathetically; the trees creaked their branches; the water in Murderer's Creek ran away gleefully, as if amused at the chagrin of the two plotters. If the Indian understood, he gave no evidence of his comprehension.

The chief was not consciously humorous, at least not as another nation understands humor, yet so keenly ludicrous was the situation, that his mental faculties must have been quickened in their slow depths. Presently, Pat, remembering the stimulating effect of liquor on a former occasion, went inside and brought out a cup, the sight of which awoke the stolid savage into something like animation. He held out his hands eagerly, and as he raised it to his thirsty lips, out from behind the surrounding rocks and trees came the eleven other braves. It was a wonderful case of mental telegraphy.

While it has been said that the pleasure of anticipation is greater than that of realization,—a theory that leaves altogether out of account the reaction of disappointment,—it required no knowledge of the law of

gravitation to make them understand, when at last, with undisguised disappointment, they saw the cup inverted above the face of their chief, that it contained nothing for them. Having drained it, the Indian held it towards Pat, uttering only the one word :

“More.”

This was the first indication that the savages understood the Tory tongue, although not the first that they shared the Tory tastes.

“More,” repeated the chief, as he moved towards the cabin door closely followed by the eleven. Colden opened a parley, while Jansen and Pat stood as living barriers in the path.

“Stand back ; don’t crowd up so,” the distiller cried.

“More,” repeated the chief.

Pat seized the opportunity to slip inside to look after his property ; the chief seized the same opportunity and dextrously followed at his heels ; while the threatening attitude of those remaining admonished Colden and Jansen that better terms could be made from inside the window than from without. The Indians, however, were not to be thus eluded, and the Tories found themselves followed and surrounded by the whole company. The palefaces were unusually pale, for the chief was persistent in the use of the single word :

“More.”

Pat glanced towards his gun, which hung over the fireplace, but the look was seen, and evoked such threatening glances that all idea of forcible resistance was quickly abandoned. It would be unwise to displease the dark allies on whose help they depended, lest they should withdraw from the proposed kidnapping. Prudence gave place to policy. It would not do, however, to give them much liquor ; but a little, perhaps,

might be useful; hence, when the next imperative demand of "more" was heard, Colden directed Pat to give each a single drink, and to make haste about it, since the shadows in the darkening room, where the company stood huddled together, plainly spoke of the approaching hour for action.

"We can promise them 'more' when the 'fish' has been caught," Jansen said, pacifically. The tension was now relieved by the appearance of an open pail in the distiller's hand, a pail which was instantly seized by the chief.

"Divide it," said Jansen, handing him the tin cup, a responsibility which the chief assumed with alacrity and performed with reasonable fairness, especially to himself. The contents of the pail exhausted, again the word was heard, echoed by the whole waiting band:

"More."

"More" was not to be thought of, and a protesting murmur from the Tories, accompanied by rising and beckoning the Indians to follow them out of the room, caused a reverse movement on the part of the allies. The savages rose, but moved in the opposite direction so quickly, that Pat had hardly time to slip into the back room before they all trailed in after him, and took forcible possession by closing and bolting the door against Colden and Jansen. Remonstrance by word or act was unavailing. Alas that the "means of refreshment are ever carried to intemperance or excess." Noises from within told the listeners without that the poor distiller was getting the worst of it. The Indians tied and gagged him; then held him down on the dirty floor while they turned the spigots of his whiskey barrels and gave themselves up to the unrestricted enjoyment of firewater. In vain did the Irishman's

muffled yells tell of his distress. In vain did the Tories coax and threaten. The appointed hour for being in waiting below came and went. It was useless to speculate as to what Ettrick and Paschal had been able to do unaided. A drunken Indian is not silent, neither is he a safe or pleasant companion on a dark night in a deep wood. The increasing noise of the revellers alarmed the Tories, and caused them to fear that it would bring upon them an investigation.

"The game is up," Colden said at length, when the hour was long past and the orgies behind the closed door continued unabated.

"Let us drop this infernal business," Jansen replied, "and from this time forth cast in our lot with the patriots. There is too much risk and uncertainty in this game we've been playing."

The men shook hands in silence, and hastily left the place, and no worthier names are read in Newburgh's annals than the names of Colden and Jansen.

It is said that the Indians yet lurk in the shadows of Murderer's Creek, under the huge rocks, behind the tall tree trunks; that ghosts of their vanished canoes, which never carried Washington away captive, may be seen on moonlight nights, dancing on the water; but history has no written record to prove the legend. As for Pat,—who ever heard of an Irishman worsted behind his own whiskey barrels? Tradition unsustained by facts assures us that he escaped to establish elsewhere another and possibly safer, although equally illicit still.



## CHAPTER LI

## THE SECRETS OF A WORKBASKET

"PRETTY kettle of fish, Tom."

"Whose kettle?"

"Ettrick's, down by Murderer's Creek, last night."

"The fellow who has a pretty daughter? She rides past here, sometimes, and dazzles my eyes, she looks so fair and sweet."

"Good enough; but her father ain't fair or sweet to my taste. He deserves the noose around his neck, and will get it, I reckon."

"What's he done?"

"He asked General Washington to dinner last evening, and there was an attempt to kidnap him, I hear——"

"You don't say! Frustrated, of course?"

"Just so! That little foreign stripling who carries his head so high was mixed up in the mess, but our men rushed in and the whole *posse* were seized. They ought to be hung."

"The rope is too good for such traitors; but let's ride into Newburgh and get all the gossip. We can stop at Weigand's and wet our whistles, for it makes me dry to talk of such abominations."

At the Hasbrouck House the affairs of the previous evening were being discussed by Mrs. Washington and her housekeeper.

"I thank an all-kind Providence," Mrs. Washington was saying devoutly, tempted in the unusual excitement to sacrifice a trifle of dignity when giving her



morning orders to her trusted assistant, "it is for the best ; yet I am astonished. I had a long talk with Mr. Ettrick's daughter the other morning, you will remember. She was so much overwrought that I asked you to bring her a dish of tea."

"Yes, madam."

"I feared an attack of the vapors, since young girls are so sickly nowadays."

"I remarked her pallor, madam."

"I was sorry for her, but she seemed most persistent in her request to see the General." Mrs. Washington drew herself up a little as she said this. Her husband had not told her the particulars of the interview he had held with Margaret, lest he might alarm her, and she had somewhat resented his secrecy. The escape of the previous evening had driven everything but love and thankfulness from her heart, however, and now she was merely giving expression to an overburdened soul.

"I am sadly disappointed in the little Frenchman, madam," Mrs. Hamilton said, stooping to peep into her brick oven as she spoke. "He was civil spoken and as tidy about his laces and ruffles as any fine lady. It was a pleasure to do them up. This very morning, in all his trouble, he sent in for the loan of my housewife. He said he had a bit of mending to do, and—didn't like to ask me to do it, I suppose. I made sure the scissors were left out, although they are precious dull ; and the bodkin, too ; for I read in a tale once of a play-acting girl who was betrayed, and who killed herself with a bodkin to save the shame. She stuck it in her heart, the story said, and I did not want the poor fellow to destroy himself, and he so unfit to go out of the world."

This charitable wish that Jack Ketch should not lose his prize was overheard by General Washington himself, as he stood an unseen listener on the lawn by the kitchen door. He looked no worse for the Ettrick dinner affair, and his step as he walked quickly towards the guardhouse, because of the housekeeper's story of the workbasket, was unusually brisk. The heavy door of the spy's temporary prison was unlocked at Washington's request, while the prisoner, seated on the floor by the iron-barred window, and thinking it was the guard who had entered, continued sewing with much of the skill of a seamstress. Something in the Frenchman's attitude, or his method of work, arrested the Commander's attention, and he paused a moment, studied the singular picture before him; then, laughing quietly to himself, with an unusual light of interest and merriment in his eyes, turned suddenly and passed out.

Paschal was so intent upon his work that he did not see the visitor, but remained, with head bent down, totally absorbed in biting off a thread. As Washington stepped through the door without a word, he noticed a small bunch of violets tied with a curling lock of black hair awaiting delivery. Feeling sure the silken strand had grown on a woman's head, he was about to ask of the guard who had brought it, when he noticed Sallie Jansen near by, hiding behind an apple-tree.

"Miss Jansen," said the Commander, sternly, holding the telltale bouquet up before the culprit's shining black eyes, "do you not know that you must have permission before holding communication with the prisoner?"

"I was not holding any communication, sir," Sallie faltered; "but I was so sorry for him. I am his only

friend, and so I brought him a few flowers to cheer him ; nothing else, sir, I assure you."

Washington looked closely at the girl ; then seeing that she was evidently sincere, and, moved by a sudden purpose, he invited her to go with him into the house.

## CHAPTER LII

### ["SEARCHING OUT A MATTER"]


By the Commander's orders, Captain Ford had brought his prisoner, Miss Ettrick, into Newburgh, and now they stood before him.

The morning sunshine streamed into the dining-room of the Hasbrouck House ; the blossom-laden May breeze blew the pink petals of the apple-trees down the throat of the huge chimney ; for the rest, silence, and a sense of waiting. Margaret, dressed in her usual simplicity ; her hair in long braids, her sunbonnet dangling on her neck, a short skirt barely hiding her home-knit stockings and country shoes, Captain Ford stood by her side, brave in his uniform, yet looking harassed and sad. Evidently the previous night's vigil had not rested either his mind or body.

"Good-morning to you both," Washington said, cheerily.

The young girl curtsied ; the man saluted.

"I have brought you before me, together," the Commander proceeded in the same friendly manner, "to help, if possible, to a better understanding. I think I do not presume in a delicate matter when I say that I have been informed, and have myself observed, that my valued officer, here before me, has long hon-



ored the young woman by his side with his highest respect. The circumstances in which Miss Ettrick is unfortunately placed are of a peculiar nature. Her case is a sad one at this moment. It is my intention to delay Mr. Ettrick's trial until after the approaching festivities at West Point in honor of the Dauphin's birthday. In this waiting interval Miss Ettrick will be sadly alone. We cannot certainly predict the result of the trial, but such a crime merits severe punishment, and exile for life would be the least that could be expected. I desire, in any event, to make it possible for Miss Ettrick to remain in her own home ; this in recognition of her very great service to me. A woman at all times, especially in war times and in a new country, needs a protector, and this most estimable lady will pardon my liberty in expressing the hope that she will follow the dictates of her heart and marry as soon as convenient."

The General paused, and Margaret, again curtsying, answered with considerable spirit, "I thank you, sir, but I do not wish to marry any one. It is not your *command* that I must?"

"Certainly not," Washington replied ; then, finding that she remained silent, he added : "Margaret," addressing her for the first time by her Christian name, and looking down upon her with infinite pity, "will you tell me if the raid in your father's garden caused you to feel a prejudice against Captain Ford? If so, let me say that he was obeying my orders, and only did his duty."

A blush was the silent answer.

"Louis Paschal was my informant," continued Washington, "about the hidden treasure, and he should have your dislike and distrust rather than Captain Ford."

"I both distrust and dislike the Frenchman, sir,"

was Peggy's quick answer; "but I am glad to know that Captain Ford didn't come of his own accord."

"Captain Ford," Washington continued, "if you have any prejudice against Miss Ettrick for her connection with last night's kidnapping attempt, let me assure you that this lady was herself my informant. I owe my escape to her."

A look of radiant satisfaction spread itself over Peggy's pale face, while Ford, surprised and pleased, so expressed himself; and yet there was a shade of reservation in his tone.

"Then, my friends, what *is* the difficulty?" Washington looked from one to the other, and still the May breeze sighed.

"General Washington," Ford replied, in a straightforward, manly fashion, determined to get through with a bad piece of business as rapidly as might be, "you invite my confidence, and I make bold to give it. If Miss Ettrick entertains the feelings she has expressed for Mr. Paschal, then I fail to understand a scene I recently witnessed in a cabin in the glen, where I saw her in the company of Louis Paschal, in an——"

He was interrupted by an indignant cry from the angry girl, who crushed the apple blossoms which she held in her hand, and spoke with a distinctness and volume which echoed around the silent room.

"It is false! It is utterly false! I never met Mr. Paschal in the cabin, and yet this is the second time I have heard it referred to. My father spoke of it. What can it mean? I am on no terms of intimacy with Mr. Paschal. I hate and despise him, and know him to be a traitor and spy. Through him I have lost my dear father, and—and——" pride prevented the speaker mentioning the loss of Ford's respect, but the idea unex-

pressed forced her to add, significantly, "he has made me seem other than what I am."

"If Miss Ettrick has no remembrance of meeting the Frenchman in the glen," said Ford, incredulously, "has she any objection to his coming here now and telling us what *he* remembers?"

"Send for him, quick!" said the enraged girl, imperatively, secure in her own innocence.

## CHAPTER LIII

### HIS TITLE TO A CROWN

It is doubtful if the task which Washington had undertaken is to be found laid down in any work upon military tactics and strategy. It was an emergency without precedent, but did not seem very seriously to disconcert him. Asking them to step into the office and remain for a few minutes with his secretary, the General gave directions to have the spy brought to the house, and he then sought a conference with his wife and Mrs. Hamilton. To say that they were surprised at his statements and requests, would be to describe their feelings mildly.

"Can it be possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Washington, in amazement.

"I never suspected such a thing!" said Mrs. Hamilton, incredulously.

Having secured their promise of co-operation, Washington directed the guard, when he appeared, to take the spy upstairs, whither Mrs. Washington and the housekeeper soon followed. The General was not communicative when he returned to the office. He had no

immediate business for his secretary and excused him from remaining in the room. An element of mystery seemed to be in the air, and this was by no means relieved when the announcement of, "All is ready," was made at the door.

"Let them come in," was the quick response, and into the room hesitatingly stepped a woman, followed by a soldier carrying a musket, with a most amused expression on his face.

"You may wait outside," said the General to the guard, and the latter withdrew, closing the door.

The woman was fittingly attired in one of Mrs. Washington's dresses, but her walk was not at all confident; her manner was quite abashed; her petticoats dragged on the floor; evidently she was scarcely accustomed to her apparel. Her hair was cropped closely, like a boy's; she made no curtsy, but let her deep, searching gray eyes dart around the room as if looking vainly for means of escape. It was plain that she recognized every person present; recognized them and dreaded their censure. She looked longest and almost beseechingly at Margaret, whose face suddenly grew white with astonishment as she met the imploring glance.

"Miss Ettrick," Washington asked, quickly noticing the look the new-comer had given Peggy, "do you recognize this person?"

"I do, sir," was the ready answer, and in giving it the speaker unconsciously drew nearer Ford, casting the while a smile of heavenly pity at the frightened woman before her.

"Do you recognize the person?" Washington asked, turning to the captain.

"Yes, sir; it is the Frenchman," the captain re-

plied, unhesitatingly ; " although why he comes before you in a lady's dress, I cannot imagine. I do not know what the disguise means."

" We will see presently," said the Commander, gravely ; then, turning abruptly to the woman, he said : " Captain Ford states that he saw Miss Ettrick in your company in a cabin in the glen ; and she states that she never saw you there. What have you say ?"

" Both statements are true," said the woman, with a sort of French jauntiness which did not forsake her, even in these terrible circumstances ; her native diplomacy suggesting that it might still be possible to secure the Commander's clemency by telling the entire truth. " I *was* in the glen, and I *did* sit alone with Miss Ettrick on purpose to mislead Captain Ford, whom I knew to be approaching."

Peggy listened with wide-eyed wonder, her eyes fixed in astonishment on the face of the narrator, who continued :

" Miss Ettrick came to the cabin to warn her father, but fell upon the floor in a faint from excitement as soon as she entered the door. She didn't see me. We placed her, while unconscious, on the couch, and I remained with her, while the others secreted themselves."

Ford's grim features began to relax, but he was still mystified as to why Paschal should be standing before them in the dress of a woman. He had not long to wait.

" I am a woman ; my name is Louise Paschal," she cried, then, suddenly realizing her personal danger, dropped unconsciously into the construction of her native language. " *Mon Dieu*, it is I who am to blame. *Ciel!* The hazard has been great ; it is not I who have no courage. I die, but I have the good courage.



But, yes, the General Washington is great. I am a woman. My father is a brave man, my mother has also taught me of the braves, my Indian ancestors. I have no fear. I die, and I ask no mercy. My reward is lost, I care not to live. I am a woman. My hazard was for all a woman cares for, and it is lost. I came from New York to do a daring deed. I was promised a reward, and I have failed. A woman is glad to die when she fails. I have no fear. I die gladly."

"But why did you wear a disguise?" asked Peggy, forgetful, in her astonishment, of the etiquette that required her to keep silence: "have you no father or brother to whom such an enterprise could have been intrusted? I think whoever sent you was bad and cruel. Oh, dear General Washington, do pardon the poor girl! She cannot be very much older than I am, and she must have suffered greatly before she was forced to come to Newburgh on this wicked errand. She must be, I am sure, alone in the world, with only God in heaven to watch over her. I—I—who have known what it is to be motherless, I can pity her! Think of it, she is a woman like me, and yet she dared so much, and all for a bad purpose! If only she had been taught in a home like mine to do right. Forgive her, that some one may give her another chance. Oh, I pray you, greatest, wisest, best of men, have mercy on the ignorant creature! God who made her a woman is sorry for her now. I am sure He looks down on her and is sorry. He is the pitying Judge of us all; His loving Son forgives us all. The thief on the cross was pardoned; the Magdalen,—everybody who is sorry is forgiven; she is sorry; forgive her, and let her go."

Margaret's appeal came straight from her heart, and

was heard by the others with undisguised astonishment and admiration. Suddenly, her former love for Louis Paschal had purified itself, and her passion changed to a compassion that was almost divine.

Captain Ford's heart beat quickly, while a rush of tenderness swept over him. The explanation that Margaret had fainted at the cabin, and was ignorant of all that had occurred during her swoon, satisfied his outraged sense of honor ; and the unexpected throwing aside of a man's disguise forever set straight the tangled web of affairs, while above all else the girl's impassioned plea proved the purity of her heart. Surely, she felt neither chagrin nor disappointment since the revelation of the sex of the spy ; nothing at all but heavenly pity. She forgot herself, her love, her hate, to remember a sister woman and to plead for her.

As the burning log gives back the roar of the wind in the swaying branches of the tree, so the faces of the two men gave sympathetic response to Margaret's impassioned words. During the few eloquent moments of silence which followed, Washington removed his glasses, and did not think it beneath his dignity to wipe the telltale moisture from his eyes.

"The power to pardon does not rest with me. In America, no one person is King."

"But you have just exercised one of the functions of a king," said Margaret, emboldened by the kindly way in which her appeal had been received.

"We are all sovereigns, you know," he answered, smiling ; "but name the function you have in mind."

Margaret's face beamed with gratitude as well as hope as she quickly replied : "Did not Solomon say that *'the honour of KINGS is to search out a matter'*?"

And if you had not 'searched out' the 'matter' in which we are all concerned, would there not have been a life unhappily and needlessly wrecked?"

The Commander did not answer directly, nor did he betray the satisfaction he felt at the removal of all cause of distrust of Margaret, for his mind sadly reverted to the fate of the Tory and the spy. From this he presently turned to Ford and abruptly said :

"Miss Ettrick is no longer under your care, unless—" he hesitated and looked significantly at Margaret—"unless she desires it."

It was fortunate that Mrs. Washington was not present, else the General's slumber that night might have been again disturbed ; for Margaret stepped impulsively to where the Commander was sitting, and throwing her arms about his neck planted two resounding kisses upon his forehead. Then, reminding him of the promise to be as merciful to her father as he could, she turned a trusting although tearful face to Jonathan Ford and was about to speak, when she was interrupted by the captain, who said, addressing the Commander : "I have much to say and explain to Miss Ettrick, and——"

"Will it take more than a month?"

"I think not, General."

"Then you are given a month's leave of absence. I think," looking at Margaret, "it would better begin at once."

## CHAPTER LIV

### "MERCY SEASONS JUSTICE"

MOTIONING the spy to be seated, the General followed Ford and Margaret from the office. He checked their further expression of gratitude, and turned from them to seek Sallie Jansen, who had spent the long and anxious interval in many an incorrect conjecture as to the cause of the delay. Handing her the bunch of violets he had brought with him from the guardhouse, he said :

"The prisoner is in my office. You have my permission to go in and present the flowers." To the guard he added : "Let the lady pass."

There were no witnesses to the interview, which was brief ; nor did Sallie remain to thank the Commander for the privilege.

"She was red enough, when she came out, to burn herself," explained the guard to the General, when he inquired if she were gone.

Calling Secretary Jonathan Trumbull, the General intrusted to him, in strict confidence, the mission of visiting prisoner Ettrick. He was directed to say, that the Commander's influence would be used to have the probable death sentence changed to exile to Nova Scotia, provided Ettrick Grove should be deeded at once to his daughter Margaret. If further persuasion were found necessary, he could add, that if this was not done before his trial, the property would be confiscated.

It was singular that General Washington should be careful to have the soldier remain by the door of his

office, yet leave the window unguarded. Of course, the soldier could not leave his post until relieved, nor could any one presume to advise the Commander without his request. It was more singular still that the General should intercept his secretary, on the latter's return, and take him with him on a ride over to Knox's headquarters, apparently entirely forgetting the guard.

Margaret's appeal for the spy had moved him deeply :

"God who made her a woman is sorry for her."


"He is the pitying Judge of us all ; His loving Son forgives us all."

"The poor creature would be shown scant mercy by a court-martial," he thought to himself. "Perhaps the 'pitying Judge' of a higher court will be more lenient." He would let her make her own appeal.

## CHAPTER LV

### RETURNING HOME

"A MONTH's leave of absence." How strange these words sounded to Jonathan Ford. Liberty to go where he pleased and when he pleased. The most distinct impression that had been forced upon him by his military experience was that of being entirely subject to the will of another. An invisible wall blocked every by-path. An inaudible but peremptory "No" greeted every wish for personal freedom. Where the army went he went. He was part of the organization ; a wheel in the machine ; a cog on the wheel ; his duty simply to remain in his place and do as he was ordered. Now he was to have what he had so long desired,—



liberty to choose for himself; yet his first use of the privilege was to feel a distinct deprivation in not being able to go to General Washington and ask permission to go to Ettrick Grove. In this emergency he asked Margaret instead, and was not a little disconcerted and disappointed when she told him frankly that she preferred to return to her home alone.

Poor Ford! The law of negation and limitation evidently obtained in civil as well as military life. He had merely passed from the dictation of one authority to that of another no less autocratic.

"Will you ride my horse?" he asked; "he is strong and safe, and you can guide him by just a touch of your hand upon his neck." He looked at her hand as if he thought its lightest touch upon his own neck would be a sufficient guide through life for him also.

"Indeed I will, if you will let me," she responded, with such cheerfulness as she could muster. Civil life again became attractive to the captain, as Margaret added, "You remember, General Washington left me in your care."

Never was Margaret so long in mounting. All attempts at adapting the captain's saddle to her use proved unsatisfactory, and twice Ford was obliged to lift her down, taking care each time to give her an exhibition of his strength by putting her down as if she were in danger of breaking.

"Let me ride without any saddle," she said at length.

"Not bareback!"

"Certainly. I have been accustomed to it all my life. If you will give me your hand—there—;" placing her foot on it, she vaulted easily upon the horse's back. "I am not at all afraid. I will show you that there is no danger."

She stroked and spoke to the spirited animal, and, giving him free rein, guided only as the captain had suggested, darted out of the yard and up the road before he could stop her. The return was a few moments later, when the yard fence was jumped, and the course between the apple-trees made the captain fear lest she should be dragged from her seat by the low hanging branches.

"May I go now?" she asked, as, aglow with excitement from the ride, she reined up where the captain stood.

"When may—I come for the horse?" he asked, in reply.

"To-morrow," and she was away.

The home-coming was a sad one to Margaret, and "to-morrow" seemed a long way off to the poor girl. Her tears fell thick and fast when she entered the small parlor and realized that her girl-life was over. Her former associations were broken off; her past was a closed book; her future a new volume whose leaves she dared not cut. She dreaded self-examination, lest duty should compel her to follow her father into exile. A nameless love of Newburgh and its environment swept over her.

When the slaves gathered about her, overwhelming her with their love and pity, she let them caress her, but had no words to answer their questions. Chloe brought her a hot supper; old Pete "toted" her up to bed; Dinah, the much-loved mammy, sat by her side, as if she had been again her baby.

At last she slept.

## CHAPTER LVI

### DARKNESS AND DAWN

"COME! come! Oh, come!"

A distant, mysterious voice, full of pleading agony. Out of the woods—out of the air. Where was it? What was it? Margaret's returning consciousness could not determine; but now, wide awake and alert, she sat up in bed to listen.

She had been dreaming of Louise Paschal, and the voice—a woman's voice—seemed to come directly from her.

Again she listened, her eyes wide open, straining to see if they could solve the mystery; but they showed her only the night without. As her eyes gradually adjusted themselves to the darkness, the familiar objects in the room slowly took their positions about her, revealed only by their dim outlines. She rose from her bed and looked out into the blackness of midnight. The flowers in the garden were asleep, save for their perfume which floated up like a whisper of summer time. The sound of the water in the glen scarcely reached her ear; the branches of the trees tossed uneasily, as if in sympathy with the agonized cry.

Again the weird call penetrated above and through all the muffled sounds of the sleeping night.

"Come! come! Oh, come!"

The die was cast. She obeyed the summons. Quickly dressing and mounting Mollie, she started out she knew not whither. Her mind was too much dazed to think of danger, or to notice what direction her horse



was taking, and Mollie, unguided, turned to the left on the road which plunged into the deep wood, crossed the noisy waters of Murderer's Creek, and mounted the long incline of Forge Hill.

Suddenly Paschal's words came to her mind ;

"We are never alone, for everything speaks to us ; it is we, instead, who are dumb."

With mind and heart alert to every occult influence, she listened for voices that would speak to her. Out from the silence of the night again came the words :

Ecoute au fond des bois  
Murmurer une voix :  
Rappelle-toi.

Ecoute, dans la nuit,  
Une voix qui gémit :  
Rappelle-toi.

Tant que mon cœur battra,  
Toujours il te dira :  
Rappelle-toi.

She gradually became aware that an Indian was walking on either side of Mollie's bridle, and that the horse was now under their guidance. Still she felt no fear. It may be she had passed through so much that she dreaded nothing more. She rode on in silence, the Indians walking on either side ; before her and behind her the pitch blackness of night. The party travelled towards Newburgh, over the road familiar to the girl from childhood. Here was the turn where she had reined up her pony only two days ago to ask help from Captain Ford. Here he had cut her. She sighed and rode on. Presently, by hidden trails and crosscuts, she found she was being taken westward ; and, again on a



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well-worn turnpike, she must urge Mollie farther and farther from home. At last, a halt was made in front of an old stone house known as the Gardner House, a building which stands to-day, with no one to tell to those who stop to ask, its long forgotten tale

"Where am I? Who wants me here?"

There was no answer to the timid question, and Margaret found herself left alone on the threshold of a house she had never before entered. If whispers of the traitors who lived here had reached New Windsor, she did not recall them now, as she listened again for the voices which had called her out of her sleep, and which had bidden her follow these silent Indian guides. A strange compulsion—a power outside of herself—led her to follow a faint flicker of light into the hall, then again up a steep ladder-like stairway into an upper hall, through an open door, to find lying on a ragged bed Louise Paschal herself. The woman's attitude showed extreme weakness, and the startled visitor's first kind-hearted impulse was to try to pull the poor creature up on the pillows. The attempt was a fruitless one, as the Frenchwoman, now in the last stages of a rapid dissolution, had no power to hold herself up, even in bed.

"Water. I have thirst?" The words whistled through dry lips. The breathing was loud and stertorous, sounding like a heavy snore to those whose experience does not recognize this unmistakable deathbed sign. There was an earthen jug in the room, but it was empty, and while Peggy hesitated whether or not to leave the poor creature alone, to go in search of some one to fill the ewer, the Frenchwoman, with something of her old courtliness, said: "I thank you for coming, Mam'selle. I beg that you stay. I cannot hurt you."

"I fear you are very ill," Margaret answered; then

was interrupted by the dying woman, in the old winsome fashion : "Fear nothing for me, *cherie*. I die, but I have no unhappiness. I escape. I fled through the window, but I have no wish to live. I die of what I have swallowed. Is it poison? No matter. I hide here. I call aloud for you. I ask you to forgive all. I have known your story from the first. You are good. I have envied you the love you would not take, the love of a good man. I am different. I am glad to die. I have failed. I wish not to return to meet his hate and scorn. I know him. He will hate me, and I have loved him well. I escape. *Mon Dieu*, I escape at last."

The twice repeated word "escape" stirred the dying woman's sluggish blood into a quicker pulsing. She sat up in bed, her weakness temporarily gone, and seemed to assume an attitude of expectancy,—a flying attitude, till a thought of a "Winged Victory" might have occurred to a spectator less subjectively interested than Margaret Ettrick.

"Are you really dying?" she asked. "Can't I do anything to save you?"

"Let me die," was the exhausted answer. The "flying victory" manner was gone, and only defeat wrote itself on the worn figure, which once more sank down in the poor bed.

"But yes, Mam'selle," she continued, gathering together her fast failing strength, "let me tell you something that you have not known with all your goodness and softness. You are not hard on the sinful, but you are hard on the loving, you are hard on yourself. You are only soft to look at and to touch. I have not hurt you, by looking at you, nor by touching you, *helas!* I who am a woman; but I have taught you to love.

It was amusing at first ; yet it was a *rôle* I must play, and by my pretence you have learned how to love."

"I forgive you," was the half-grudging answer, for Peggy did not forget all she had suffered.

"*Mon Dieu!* You say what is not true. You hate me. Hear my story and let me die."

"Tell it," Margaret said ; but she drew herself away.

"I have told it to none, I tell it but to you. I had not a home like yours. I have related my adventures, and you have been amused. I tell the last. It is the worst and the best. I love some one very dearly, passionately, ah, you know not how to love ! I follow some one to his quarters ; he is a fine officer, and I beg to stay always. He laughs ; he kisses my cheek ;—ah, that was so sweet to me. He permits me to gently stroke his face ; yet, he scolds and turns me away, and always I come back. At last he is sick ; ah ! so sick ! I pray the dear Mother of God and all the blessed saints that he may recover. I watch him. I sleep by his side. I never leave him, day nor night, and the good God heals him, and he says I may stay always, only he makes me not his wife."

The listener shuddered and drew herself farther away, but as the speaker's voice grew weaker she came again, somewhat hesitatingly, close up to the bedside, and bent over the dying woman's pillow.

"Go on," she whispered, shocked to learn that earth and heaven may sometimes touch in a crime for love's sake. Surely, there was far more of earth than heaven in the tale she heard, yet there was a spirit of something ennobling in the abandon of the woman's self-sacrifice in a bad cause.

"There came a time,—it must come to all who love

without reason, without right, without the sanction of Mother Church ; for this man was a heretic, and I knew it, when I wanted all his life. I had given up all for him. I had left my father's house, and dared not return. My mother scorned me, for the Indians know not passion as we French know it. I asked for all my master's love,—all, all, all ; not a part, but all ! I begged with tears. I begged with anger. I begged with kisses. He scorned me. He went to fine dinners, and he met fine ladies ; yet, it was I who made him ready, and so beautiful that all must love him. Men called him cruel, but I loved him. I grew so jealous that I dressed as his groom and followed him to every party. I was the 'man' who held his horse. It was fine to wait outside the windows and see every one look at him, and know I had made him admired by my woman's care. Once I fell asleep, and he kicked me to wake me. I did not mind the black bruise, for I loved him ; yet I was not satisfied to be his servant, and I told him so."

"What did he say?"

"He swore and kicked me again, but he let me help him on his horse,—and yet I loved him !"

"Do you love him now?" Peggy's astonishment made her forget her horror, and she leaned so close to the spy that one of her long braids fell across the dying woman's face and lay there unnoticed.

"Yes, a thousand times yes. To love once is to love always. Ah, you do not know,—but I cannot go back to him, so I am glad to die. I will not meet his hate and his scorn. I have failed. I lose my reward. He promised me ; he said it in two words ; ah, but he is clever always to make plans. I was to come to Newburgh, and gain General Washington's confidence by

telling of the treasure hidden in your father's garden. He knew of it and told me. I told your good father the money was to be given back to him. The rich gentlemen in New York have the money to help these great plans. The plot was to succeed. I have made it to all fail, *helas!* and I loved him so! It is over. You were amiable, but Mam'selle Jansen, she thinks only of herself. Your father guessed all, but you—you learned to love——”

Margaret shook her head. It seemed impossible—now.

“What was the reward that you were promised?” she asked.

“General Prescott,” the woman answered, letting the name she had hitherto concealed, which even Washington had failed to elicit from her, now escape her lips; “he promised me, he promised me——” twice the phrase was said over, as if the speaker loved the memory of the lost compensation, and lingered in the telling——“that he would make me *his wife*. We were riding back to his quarters, after a dinner at a great house way off in the country, out beyond the city. It was dawn when he came out of the house, and as we rode along he told me the plan. He was angry at something, I know not what, but not at me. He asked me to go to Newburgh, and he told me my reward in two words. ‘If you succeed,’ he said, ‘I will make you—’ then he whispered the two words in my ear——‘*my wife!*’”

“And the plot failed?” Peggy felt almost sorry for the failure, in her supreme ecstasy of sympathy for the disappointed woman, whose life-story she had been forced to hear.

“But, yes, I failed. I cannot return to him and be




spurned. I have borne the scorn here in Newburgh,—the ridicule, the laugh,—but here I have no shame. I called you to me for your own sake, to tell you all. I would not hurt you. Will you let me kiss your cheek, your lips? I have known no other good woman like yourself. I did not know I could love such a one.”

“You have done me no wrong,” Margaret said, but she made no motion to give the asked-for kiss, and the lips ready for it were fast turning gray.

“Goodby,” the Frenchwoman gasped, a certain dramatic instinct buoying her up to the last. She sank back on her pillows as gracefully as ever she had done anything in her always unreal life. She posed, although she was actually dying.

“I have loved! I am a bad woman—I have loved a bad man. You are a good woman, but you cannot love as I do.”

Peggy started up in protest, for she felt she had a right to deny this accusation, yet of what use? Why argue with one whose thoughts at the last should be on heavenly matters, not earthly. Still, earth was near and heaven far away. The woman was sinking farther down in the bed; the heavy breathing was becoming mere gasping; the gray eyes drew dull. The living, speaking person was rapidly becoming a thing, a something to be spoken of as “it,”—as “remains,”—to be put into the earth and left alone, to be forgotten. It was dreadful. An unmistakable blueness spread itself over the drawn face, the hands which had known so well to touch and to cling grew rigid; the feet drew themselves up; there was a horrid whistling sound in the throat; and when Margaret at last stooped down to give the kiss she had grudgingly withheld, the lips and brows were cold.



“God himself is love” were the words she said, words, alas, spoken too late to be heard by ears now forever deaf. A second time Margaret Ettrick fell fainting by the spy’s side ; one as motionless as the other, and almost as cold.

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It was never known how Peggy found her way beyond Newburgh, since her story of the calling voices and Indian guides sounded like the imaginings of fever.

Of course, Captain Jonathan Ford married Miss Peggy Ettrick, that together they might prove beyond cavil—Louis Paschal’s theories to the contrary notwithstanding—that a good man can best love a good woman, and that a good woman is at her best when she loves a good man.

Thus yesterday’s story ends ; a story that repeats itself today ; a story that repeats itself tomorrow ; a story that shall ever repeat itself while life and love shall last.

THE END.







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